

FALL 2004

# SMALL FARM QUARTERLY

Good Living and Good Farming that Connect Land, People, and Communities

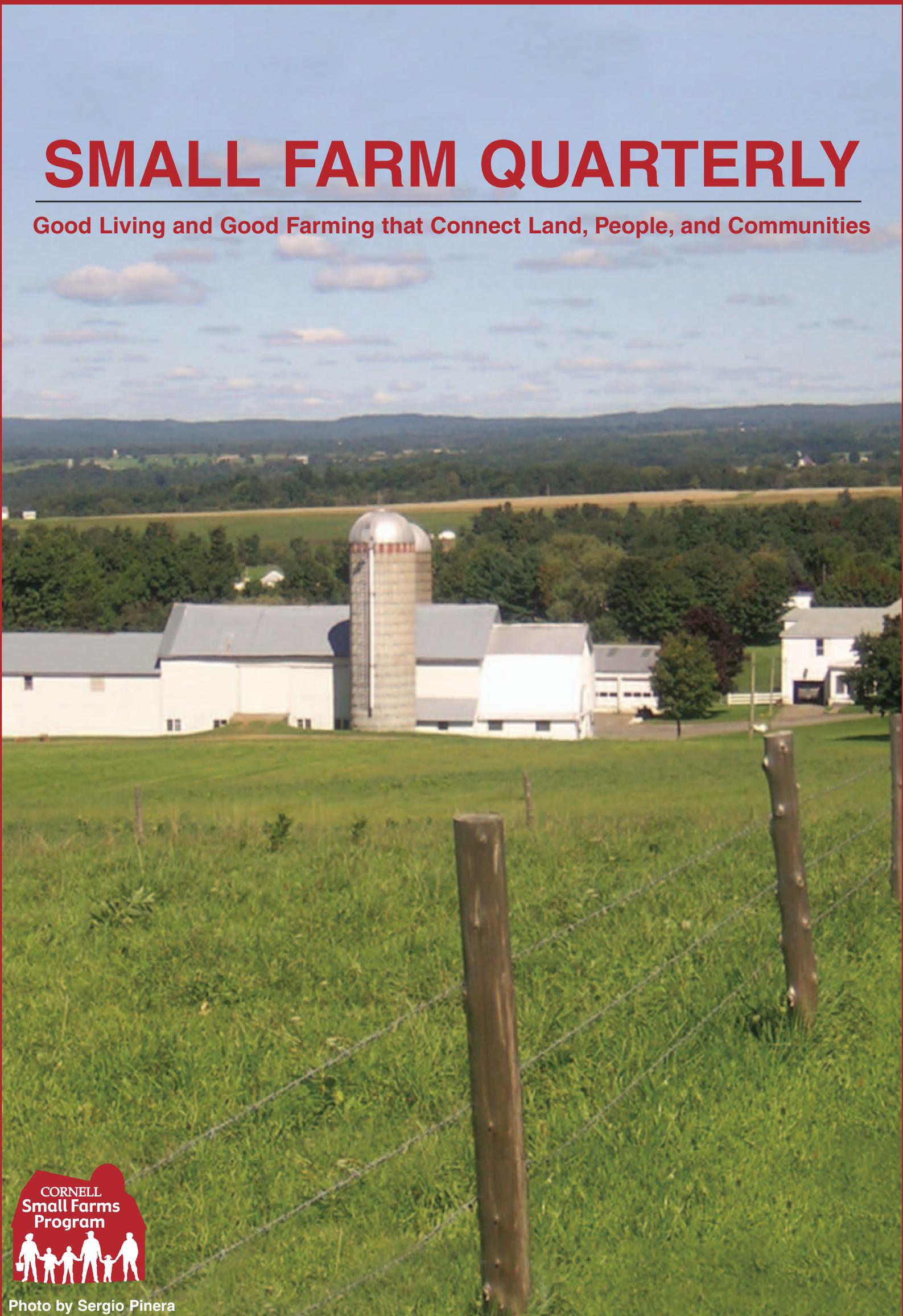


Photo by Sergio Pinera

# SMALL FARM QUARTERLY - Fall 2004

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## SMALL FARM QUARTERLY

### Good Farming and Good Living that Connect People, Land, and Communities

Small Farm Quarterly is for farmers and farm families — including spouses and children - who value the quality of life that smaller farms provide.

#### OUR GOALS ARE TO:

- Celebrate the Northeast region's smaller farms;
- Inspire and inform farm families and their supporters;
- Help farmers share expertise and opinions with each other; and
- Increase awareness of the benefits that small farms contribute to society and the environment.

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#### EDITORIAL TEAM:

- Anu Rangarajan, Cornell Small Farms Program
- Celeste Carmichael, NYS 4-H Teen Program
- Tom Gallagher, Albany County CCE
- Joanna Green, Cornell Small Farms Program
- Claire Hebbard, NY FarmNet
- Bill Henning, CCE-NWNY Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Team/PRO-DAIRY
- Mariane Kiraly, Delaware County CCE
- Judson Reid, Yates County CCE
- Cathy Sheils, NY FarmNet
- John Thurgood, Delaware County CCE-NYC Watershed Agriculture Program
- Eric Toensmeier, New England Small Farm Institute

#### FOR SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION CONTACT

Tracy Smith, Lee Publications, Inc., PO Box 121, Palatine Bridge, NY 13428  
888-596-5329 subscriptions@leepub.com

#### FOR ADVERTISING INFORMATION CONTACT:

Tom Mahoney, Lee Publications, Inc., 518-673-3237, ext 244  
tmahoney@leepub.com

#### SEND YOUR LETTERS AND STORIES TO:

Joanna Green  
Cornell Small Farms Program  
135 Plant Science Building, Cornell University,  
Ithaca, NY, 14853  
607-255-9227 jg16@cornell.edu

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## FROM THE EDITORS

By Bill Henning

You have most likely seen us the people standing around at the educational displays at farm events, just waiting for someone like you to talk to. In some respects, attending to a display is similar to running a

business. They both have their cycles of busy times and quiet times. During the quiet spells I sometimes wonder if this is a good use of my time.

However, while attending to the Small Farms Program display at Empire Farm Days last August, there was never any doubt in my mind that this was an excellent

use of my time! Being able to connect with people from all walks of life who are searching for something is not only interesting, it becomes stimulating and rewarding.

The most rewarding aspect of working the Small Farms display is that visitors are not looking for something as simple and mundane as a tractor. These folks are shopping for a whole new way of life. That way of life is something that many people have been led to believe is impossible.

At Empire Farm Days I talked to more than one college student who thought the only way to farm was with 500 cows in a free stall barn. You have to feed a TMR, use BST, have the vet come on a scheduled basis and adopt every new technology before the neighbors do to gain the competitive edge. You have to have people management skills for all the employees you have to hire. You have to expand your output, they hear, by at least 10% every year just to keep up with inflation.

These folks seldom hear what that this constant expansion does to the prices they are forced to live with. And, seldom are they provided a road map for paying for that high cost business. All this leaves them somewhat overwhelmed and bewildered.

Can you imagine the look on their faces when I tell them there are profitable dairy operations in New York where the cows

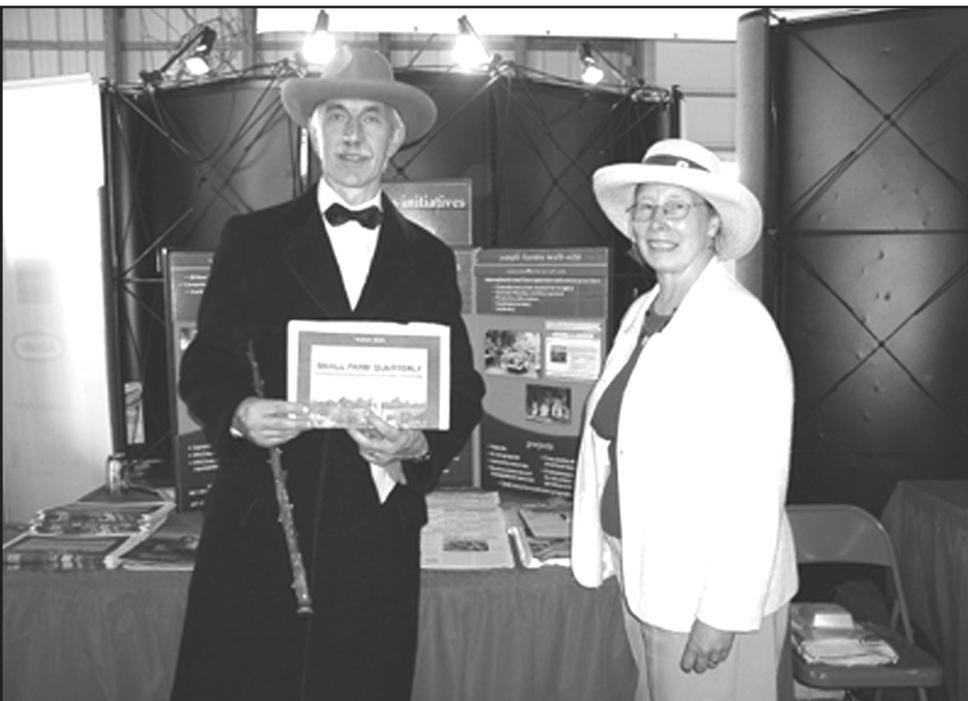
never go inside a building except to be milked? When they hear about a farm family being supported by eight Jersey cows and direct marketing? Or a farm family with income rivaling the wages of a Kodak employee, with just 40 cows?

And then there are the non-farming folks with small farm dreams. When they have shared their aspirations with others they almost always get the same response, "You can't make any money on a small farm anymore!"

But at our Small Farms display they learned about a whole range of opportunities in vegetables, grass-based livestock farming, direct marketing, farm markets, wood lot management, diversification, how to make money on low quality land, government assistance programs, where to go for assistance, and more.

What was most gratifying? Being able to let people know that small-scale farming can be affordable and can be profitable - letting them know that their dreams can come true!

**Bill Henning is the Small Farms Specialist with PRO-DAIRY/CCE-NWNY Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Team, and operates a small grass-based beef and sheep farm in the Finger Lakes region of New York.**



Dean Susan Henry of Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and special guest Liberty Hyde Bailey stopped by to visit the Small Farms Program display at Empire Farm Days last August.

## READERS WRITE

### APPRECIATED "SMALL IS FLEXIBLE"

This is an excellent article and one I will pass on to a few farmers that I know are struggling with similar decisions. My one complaint is that, to me, Fay is still farming even though he no longer milks cows. He may not be dairying but he is still farming.

**Kirby Selkirk**  
Sheep farmer and NY Farm Bureau Field Advisor, Region Seven  
Chateaugay, NY

### GOOD STUFF!

Quick note - I'm getting some nice comments on the article in Summer SFQ (Keeping the Small Farms Legacy Alive). It's good to know that so many are reading your supplement to *Country Folks*! There is lots of good stuff packed in there and folks are really getting into it!

THANKS for your help!

**Alice Allen**  
Al-lens Farm, Wells River, Vermont

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## SMALL FARM PROGRAM UPDATE

### SMALL FARM EDUCATION GRANTS AWARDED

The Cornell Small Farms Program is pleased to announce its 2004-5 grant awards for innovative small farm education. The grants program was initiated in 2000 to help Cornell Cooperative Extension educators better serve New York's smaller farms. Grants of up to \$5000 are awarded to CCE educators with creative program ideas that specifically target local small farms businesses and the families who live and work on these farms.

Farmer-to-farmer learning is a key feature of many projects funded by the Small Farms grants program. Experienced farmers serve as teachers and mentors to other farmers in such projects. Farmer participation in planning and evaluating projects is also an important priority. Farmers initiate many projects with their ideas for educational programs, and help their Extension partners get it going.

A committee of farmers reviews all proposals and makes final recommendations on which projects to fund. This year the team reviewed 22 proposals seeking a total of \$82,600. We awarded funds totaling about \$24,000 to 9 projects. The quality of the proposals was excellent, making the selection extremely difficult.

This year's funded projects include a small-scale horse farm network that will be established in Suffolk and Nassau Counties for the purpose of sharing information and expertise, and to provide opportunities to bring Extension educational programs and resources to this underserved group.

A new dairy discussion group in Cayuga County will foster farmer-to-farmer learning and mentoring among small-scale dairies. Members of an existing Beef Producers Discussion group will help the dairy group get started.

A direct marketing and agritourism project in South Central New York will create a support network to help producers become successful "destination farms." In Oneida

County, a mentoring program for new farmers will give beginners the opportunity to receive critical guidance from an experienced farmer to help them develop and manage their businesses.

A farm women's training and support network in Chenango County will bring participants together to develop skills and experience for successfully managing the business end of their family farming operation.

Farmer discussion groups for organic, grazer, beef, sheep and goat producers will continue to serve as a focal point for CCE's small farm programming in Jefferson County.

A low-input grape growers project will bring together viticulturists from the Finger Lakes and Long Island to share experience in low-input vineyard management. A greenhouse mentoring project will connect beginning and experienced producers in Essex County.

And finally, CCE educators in New York City will provide training and support to experienced small-scale farmers to help them serve as mentors for new immigrant farmers, as part of the ongoing New Farmer Development Project.

For more information on the 2004-5 grants projects visit [www.smallfarms.cornell.edu](http://www.smallfarms.cornell.edu), or call the Cornell Small Farms Program office at 607-255-9227.

### 2004 SMALL FARM EXPO A GREAT SUCCESS!

Over 3200 people attended the 2004 Small Farm and Rural Living Expo in New Paltz, NY on September 17-18. While downpours and flooding from Hurricane Ivan dampened participation on Saturday, the crowds on Sunday made up for it. Organizers were very pleased with attendance at the relatively new Expo event.

Sixty-seven different workshops were offered, organized along seven different "tracks" rural living, natural resources, commercial horticulture, business, risk management, equine and livestock, and live

(Cont. on next page)

**STEWARDSHIP AND NATURE****How to Turn Fields of Frustration into Fields of Fulfillment**

By Valerie Podolec

Small scale farms have a unique situation; usually acreage is limited and farmers need to efficiently use the acreage they have available. In other words, what is each field best suited for?

In an ideal world all fields would be well drained and the topography would be perfect for producing a commodity crop. In the real world we usually have a field that the tractor is stuck in once or twice a year. Or we have fields where we sit on the edge of our tractor seat, lean and pray.

If you have these situations on your property, you have an alternative — the opportunity to manage these areas for wildlife. The Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) are two Farm Bill Programs available that provide cost share assistance to establish wildlife habitat. Participation in these programs not only benefits the farming community, but is available to anyone who owns land.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides the technical and financial assistance for the initial establishment and some maintenance of the wildlife habitat. The emphasis of both programs is to create and enhance wildlife habitat and protect water quality.

Many landowners have taken marginal agricultural land and devoted this acreage to wildlife; providing habitat for waterfowl, turkey, deer and songbirds. Enhancing wildlife habitat also provides enjoyment to the landowner in the form of hunting and viewing of wildlife.

**THE WETLAND RESERVE PROGRAM — WRP**

The focus of the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) is to protect, restore and enhance wetlands on private property. The WRP program typically creates open water areas that are 2-4 feet deep. Some of the most common techniques used to create open water in the wetland are potholes, ditch plugs and low berms.

These open water areas encourage the growth of wetland plants that are beneficial to waterfowl, providing food, cover and nesting habitat. Some of the wildlife we've spotted in WRP sites includes Great Blue Heron, Wood Ducks, Mallards, Canadian Geese, Blue-Wing Teal and River Otter. To be eligible, the proposed acreage has to have a past history of agriculture and been owned 1 year prior to enrollment. WRP offers three options for enrollment: permanent easements, 30 year easements and 10 year restoration agreements. The permanent easement includes an easement payment equal to the agricultural value of the land and USDA pays for 100% of the wetland restoration.

The 30 year easement option pays the landowner 75% of what would be paid for a permanent easement, as well as 75% of the restoration costs. For the 10 year restoration agreement USDA pays for 75% of the restoration. With all options, landowners retain ownership, access and responsibility for the land.

**WILDLIFE HABITAT INCENTIVES PROGRAM — WHIP**

The WHIP program focuses on planting and management of grassland habitats and riparian forest buffers for grassland nesting birds and other wildlife. Enrollment in this program is generally for a period of 10-15 years and cost-share for the program is 75%.

The WHIP program promotes the planting and management of warm and cool season grasses for wildlife. Sites are to be mowed once every 3 years, or a third of the site every year. Mowing activities are to be conducted after July 15th and before August 31st. This is after the nesting period and ends early enough to allow regrowth before winter. Some of the species of concern in New York State are the Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Henslow Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Northern Harrier, Grasshopper Sparrow, Karner Blue Butterfly and the Short Eared Owl to name a few. Other wildlife

that benefit from grasslands are Ring-Necked Pheasants, grouse, Turkey, red and gray foxes and White-Tailed Deer. Grasslands also provide habitat for a whole cadre of small mammals including mice, moles, shrews, voles and reptiles like the milk snake.

The Wetland Reserve and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Programs are a unique opportunity to enhance the environment and receive the technical and financial assistance to do it. If you are interested in more information please contact the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office in your county.

**Valerie Podolec is a Soil Conservationist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in LaFayette, NY.**



Big Bluestem, Indian Grass, and Switchgrass provides excellent habitat for the Harrier.



Aerial view of a WRP site in Cortland County.

Photographer: Valerie Podolec



Harrier nest and chicks in a warm season grass field.

**Update**

(Cont. from previous page)

demonstrations. Topics included Introduction to Beekeeping; Exploring the Small Farm Dream; Value Added Lamb Production; Beef Production 101; and Pond Management.

"This really is a family event with an educational twist. It's an ag fair without the rides," said expo chair Les Hulcoop. Hulcoop planned the event along with staff from Cornell Cooperative Extension offices in Dutchess, Ulster, Orange and Sullivan counties in New York, as well as collaborators from New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The Cornell Small Farm Program is also a key partner.

**SMALL FARMS PROGRAM HOLDS FACILITATION SKILLS-BUILDING WORKSHOP**

This intensive, day-long session was designed to build facilitation skills for CCE

educators and others working with farmer discussion groups. The program focused on learning about group dynamics and practicing group facilitation skills, with training provided by Laura Branca and Kirby Edmonds of Training For Change Associates. The workshop was sponsored by the Cornell Small Farms Task Group, with funding from the Northeast SARE Program. Demand for the workshop far exceeded our expectations, and we ended up with a group 30 enthusiastic participants for an excellent session.

**SMALL DAIRIES STUDY GETS PRELIMINARY APPROVAL FOR FUNDING**

At last October's meeting of our Small Farms Task Group, small groups met to develop ideas for Hatch-funded research projects that would target the needs of small farms. Out of that process has emerged a successful proposal for a study of Factors Influencing the Viability of Small Dairies in NYS. The project team is head-

ed by Gil Gillespie of the Community Food and Agriculture Program, and includes Anu Rangarajan and Joanna Green of the Small Farms Program. For more information about the project contact Gil Gillespie at 607-255-9227 or gwg2@cornell.edu.

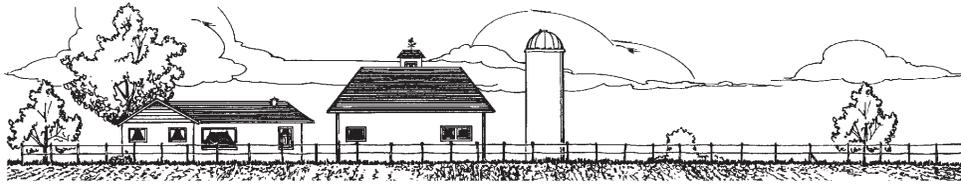
**SMALL FARMS WEB SITE**

Don't forget to check in periodically to the Cornell Small Farms Web Site. We are always adding new material, and we welcome your suggestions for useful resources that we should include. There is a wealth of information about farmer discussion groups and farmer-to-farmer learning, for

example. Just go to [www.smallfarms.cornell.edu](http://www.smallfarms.cornell.edu) and click on Working with Small Farms.

**SMALL FARMS UPDATE NOW AVAILABLE BY EMAIL**

We have launched a new monthly email newsletter to share announcements, news, and a calendar of events of interest to small-scale farmers and people who work with them. The focus is New York State, but anyone is welcome to subscribe. To do so, send an email to Joanna Green at [jg16@cornell.edu](mailto:jg16@cornell.edu) with your name, complete postal address, and the name of your county.



**FARMING OPPORTUNITIES****Buying - And Growing - Great Hay for Horses**

By Tom Gallagher

"Horse Hay" isn't what it used to be, or at least it shouldn't be what it used to be. I remember growing up on a dairy farm in Rensselaer County, NY, where we put up between 12,000 and 15,000 square bales every year. This was a lot more than our 150 Holstein dairy cattle needed, so we always sold some to our neighbors who had horses.

Back in those days we only sold the hay we didn't want to feed to our milking herd, which usually meant the hay that had the most weeds or was cut late, or any hay that had been rained on more than once.

Since those good old days back in the 60's,

things have really changed. There are a lot more horse owners here in New York's Capital District. Most of them only have a few horses and are using their horses for competition and recreation.

The owners of these small operations tend to be very well educated and want to know how to best take care of their horses. They are willing to pay whatever price it takes to provide for their horses. Most larger horse breeding and boarding operations are more cost conscious, but still want to provide the best care for their animals.

**WHAT KIND OF HAY DO HORSES NEED?**

Horses are very different than cattle, sheep and goats in that they are not ruminants.

The ruminant has a stomach with four compartments where digestion can take place, but for a horse most of the digestion of fiber takes place in the large intestine. When it comes to digesting low quality mature forages, horses are not as efficient as ruminants.

Before looking for hay, horse owners should determine what level of nutrition they need for the horses they are feeding. Mature horses ridden infrequently, brood mares in the first eight months of gestation, stallions during non-breeding season and mature overweigh horses need hay that is 8%-10% crude protein and 40%-45% ADF (Acid Detergent Fiber, a measure of fiber content). Most late June or early July-cut grasses will meet these needs.

Competition horses including breeding stallions need 8%-10% crude protein with the ADF below 36%. An early June cut grass or legume grass hay cut in mid June will meet these needs.

Brood mares in the last three months of pregnancy need 14% crude protein and less than 38% ADF. A late May early cut grass or early to mid June cut legume will meet the needs.

Weanlings and yearlings need the best hay you have, 14% crude protein with an ADF below 35%. A very early grass hay or early legume grass mixture would be needed. Keep in mind that what is "early cut" depends on where the hay is produced. Here in the Hudson Valley we can cut some of our grasses by May 20th. At higher elevations the same grass may not be ready to cut for another two weeks.

**EVALUATING HAY FOR HORSES**

Some horse owners buy hay without ever seeing it or asking for a forage analysis. But would you ever buy a pick up without seeing it and taking it for a test drive? If you're buying horse hay, you'll need to either go to the farm or have the producer bring a few bales to you. You'll need to use almost all your senses — visual, touch, and smell, to judge the quality of the hay.

Visually you can tell a lot about a bale of hay. The buyer will need to break open a bale and examine it thoroughly. First and most importantly — what kind of hay is it? Is it a legume or legume grass mixture? Or is it straight grass? What kind of grass? To determine stages of maturity, look for heading of grasses or flowering of legumes. As hay matures the protein and energy content diminish and the fiber content increases.

Check the stem size; thick stems indicate late cut mature hay. Determine the leafiness of the hay. In alfalfa 65% of the total protein and 60% of the energy is in the leaves, so more leaf and less stem indicates higher protein and energy.

Color is also important. Green color is good, a brown color can indicate weather damage, late harvest, heating damage, poor storage conditions, or hay left from the previous years in this year's crop. During the visual inspection look also for foreign materials such as weeds or grain stubble.

Once the visual inspection is completed you need to pick the hay up and feel it. If it is soft and the stems are fine it was probably cut early and has high protein and energy. If it is coarse and scratchy it was probably cut late or has weeds mixed in with the hay. If it feels damp to the touch it was baled too wet or rained on after cutting. This hay will surely mold or worse could even cause a barn fire.

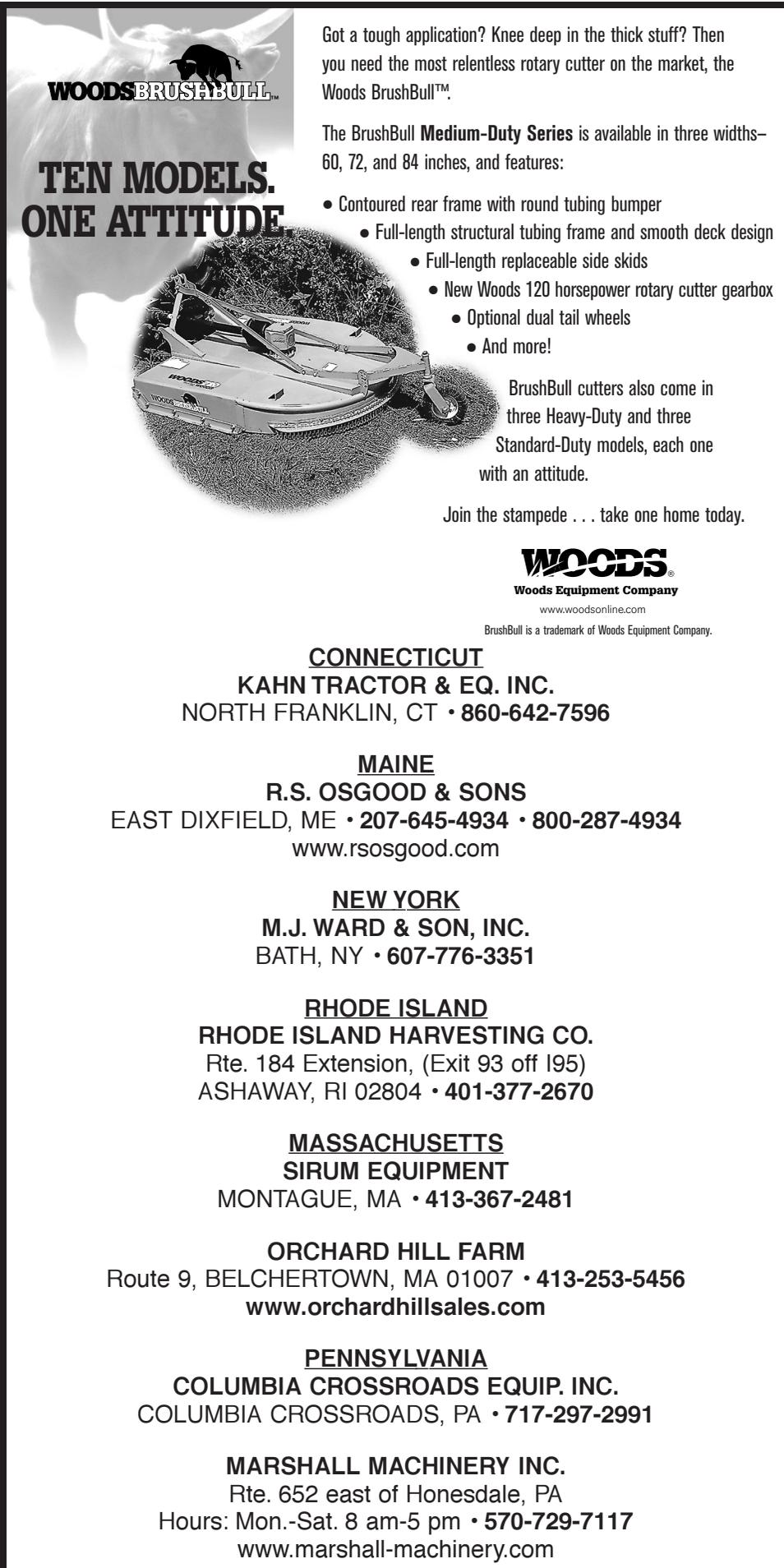
Your sense of smell should also be used when buying hay. If hay smells musty, it should not be sold for horses! Horses are more susceptible than any other species of livestock to molds and dust. If the hay has a spicy odor it probably has some percentage of weeds in it. If it smells like an acid or salad dressing it probably has been treated with a preservative. Horses will eat treated hay and in most cases hay treated with preservatives are early cut and excellent quality.

Growing and selling hay for horses For those of you growing hay, now that you know what the horse owner will be looking for, what can you do to better meet their needs? I would suggest that you submit samples of your various types of hay to forage lab. A complete forage analysis is certainly the most definitive way to determine quality. I would strongly urge you to keep good records on all of the hay you produce. Include things like cutting dates, species of legumes and grasses in the field, and weather conditions at the time of harvesting.

When someone calls to buy hay invite them to the farm to look over your harvest. If it is a large enough customer bring a few bales to the farm. Encourage the buyer to examine the hay thoroughly and take the time to answer their questions. Find out if they will be feeding their hay to an old fat mare that is only ridden once a year, or if it going to a group of yearlings. Once you have asked these questions, you will be better able to serve your customers.

You know as well as I do, that word of mouth is the best advertising. You also know that one unhappy customer can offset the praises of ten very satisfied customers. Take the time to properly meet the needs of your equine customers, big or small, and you will have those customers for life.

**Tom Gallagher is Extension Issue Leader with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Albany County, NY.**



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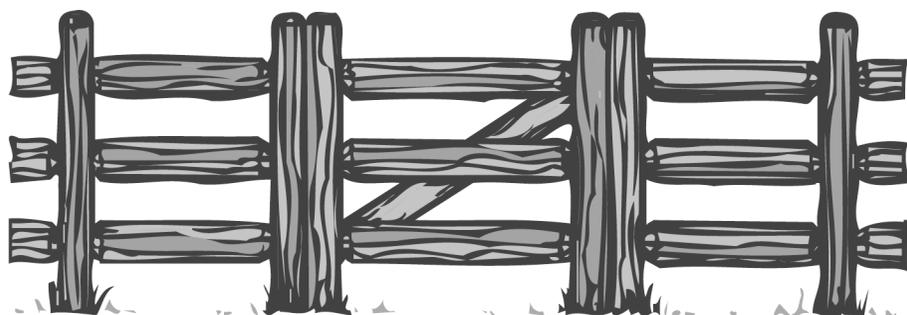
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## READERS WRITE

## Poultry Fun 101

By Nancy Glazier

My husband and I decided to get some chickens. We wanted to raise egg layers on grass since we heard the eggs were better tasting and better for us. We both have farming backgrounds, have gardened all our lives, but haven't had livestock since we were married. Somehow the word spread through the Extension office where I work, and Shawn Tiede, the 4-H Youth Development Volunteer Coordinator, asked me if I wanted chicks that were brought back from the classroom incubation projects. I said sure!

As time went on and the eggs and incubators were ready to go out to participating schools, Shawn discovered he had 12 eggs left over. He wondered if I wanted to take them home with an extra incubator. He explained it would be a sure way to end up with chicks. "We never know how many chicks will come back from the classrooms". I said I would give it a shot - we would have 3 weeks to get a brooder and chicken house built. By the end of the day, I took home 16 eggs, an incubator with the school curriculum and a zippered bag of starter feed.

I spent the next week reading about chick development. I read through the material from Shawn, and I also had done a search online for information regarding small flocks of poultry. There is an amazing amount of university information on the web. The eggs needed to be turned three times a day and kept at a constant temperature of 99 1/2°. I kept track of which side was up by marking an 'x' and 'o' on each side of the eggs. Of the sixteen eggs I had brought home, 14 hatched. By the end of the first week, Shawn had asked me if I wanted some more chicks, maybe 6 or 7 more. I said sure, what's a few more! Well, I counted ten in the box. At the end of the second week, Shawn asked if I would take 2 more late-hatchers from a classroom. What's 2 more? That brought the total to 26!

We had also started building the chicken house. We decided to build it to be mobile, so my husband found an old wagon frame at an auction, found some scrap lumber from an old barn and scrounged a couple old windows from who knows where. Of course, as wet as this spring was, the house was not completed when the chicks began hatching, so we enclosed the house with tarps until it was finished. We built a very simple brooder with the front covered with aluminum screen to watch the chicks. My family watched, the dog watched, the cat watched, any visitors watched...

One afternoon while I was watching the chicks, I noticed a daddy-long-legs in the brooder. I thought for sure one would make it into a tasty treat, but as each chick looked at it, it would give a loud screech and run around to the back side of the

waterer. What chickens! That spider wasn't that big!

When the chicks were three weeks old, it was time for them to go out to grass. We have about an acre of lawn, so we had decided to move the house around the yard. I had ordered electric netting and a battery-powered energizer to keep the chicks in and the predators out. My sons and I tried putting the fence up without connecting it to the energizer, but the chicks did not stay within the confines of the fence. "Jail break on corner 3!" We put the chicks back in their house and decided to wait until my husband could help us set the system up properly before we let them out again the next morning.

Then the dog decided he needed to investigate the chicken house. Before we were up the next morning, he tangled himself in the netting. Instead of barking to warn us of his predicament, he tried to chew himself out. Fortunately, a repair kit came with the netting.

The energizer finally got connected. The chicks left the house, and still they escaped. But, they didn't go far. Eventually, they learned what the electric netting was supposed to do.

The dog learned what it was, too. Right after we energized the system, the dog strolled up soaking wet from his romp through wet grass from the previous day's

rain. He just touched his nose to the fence. He yipped and ran to his doghouse where he spent the next two hours! He now makes a wide berth around the fence and has not touched it since.

We learned quite a bit about chicken behavior by watching. When the chicks were first on grass, I put a lawn chair in with them. When I came home from work, I would spend some time just sitting and watching. By watching, we discovered which one was at the bottom of the pecking order. It had quite a bare spot on its back. My husband put an end to that by putting some grease on the back of the one getting pecked. The ones bothering it did not like the taste.

We were planning on taking a vacation and had asked the neighbor boy to care for the chickens. Was it too much to ask to have him come twice a day to let the chickens in and out? I had the brainstorm - maybe we could take the chickens to him! I talked with his mother. The only downfall, she said, would be her younger daughters would want chickens of their own! I told her they could come visit any time, or next time they could feed the chickens.

After nine weeks, I had decided it was time to thin the flock. I called my father to come over and give me a primer on slaughtering. He had chickens when he farmed, but it had

been close to 40 years since he had butchered chickens. I had everything set up in the yard for his arrival - sharp knives, hot water for scalding, the hose for plenty of water, buckets and a clean butchering counter. Funny, how my sons disappeared. They were okay with eating chicken, but they didn't want to see the process to get to the end-product. My younger son said, "Mom, I'll bring the chickens to you, but you have to let me leave before you start. And you have to leave Blackie!"

Only one chicken has a name, so I guess it will have to stay. We stopped the slaughtering after 5 since they were a bit small. We would like to get the flock down to 12 or so with one rooster. I got the hang of it and feel confident I can do it myself next time. I like to know where my food comes from!

**Nancy Glazier is Team Assistant for the NorthWest New York Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team, Cornell Cooperative Extension/PRO-DAIRY. Her office is in Batavia. She and her family live on 14 acres in northern Livingston County.**



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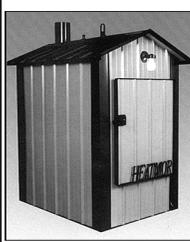


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**FARMING OPPORTUNITIES**

# Biodrying: A Manure Management Alternative for Small Dairies?

By Amanda L. Van Blarcom

If you visit the Inman farmhouse anywhere between 9 and 10 in the morning, you will most likely be greeted with several friendly, smiling faces, and offered a place at the breakfast table. The smiling faces will be those of Randy and Lynette Inman, their three children Kendra, Karen, and Brian, as well as two employees, and possibly a neighbor or two. Never a silent moment, the kitchen will be busy and warm right up until the plates are picked up and cleaned, and the family leaves for the afternoon activities.

This is the typical day at the Inman farm, and it has been that way for years. Randy's father and mother, William and Mary Inman, started the farm, named Mar-Bil Farm, 47 years ago in 1957. Years later, Randy and his family moved the operation to the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia, where the family learned a different manure management technique that they carried back to their current operation in Bovina Center in Delaware County, New York.

**A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY**

The Inmans composted manure in Virginia, which is only a part of the "biodrying" process that the Inmans have now. The biodrying project was designed by a group of engineers at Cornell Cooperative Extension and funded by the New York Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) and New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). New York State Electric and Gas Corporation (NYSEG) and Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation (NMPC) provided additional financial support.

The Inmans received the grant from NYSERDA, which is interested in promoting environmentally friendly agriculture and efficient energy use. WAC's primary reason for funding a manure management project was the farm's location in the New York City

Watershed.

"We help the farmer install the best management practices for water quality protection," says Karen Rauter, the Communication Director at WAC. The Inman farm, like many other farms in the Catskills, does not have many flat fields on which to spread manure.

"When we were looking at options for manure management on the Inman farm, we were looking for alternatives to liquid manure management," Brian LaTourette, WAC Agricultural Program Manager, explains. "The Inmans have fields that are about 5 miles away," continues LaTourette, "We were looking for a plan to reduce his need for transporting manure so far."

Transporting liquid manure has its problems. The potential for spills, and the cost and inconvenience of transporting liquid manure can be troublesome. Solid systems, on the other hand, may reduce the total mass of the manure considerably, and are a lot easier to handle with on farm equipment. Composted manure can be sold off the farm, removing nutrients from the system as well as providing revenue. These are some of the most appealing advantages of the biodrying idea.

**WHAT IS BIODRYING?**

Before the biodrying facility was built on the Inman farm, the major concerns were protecting water quality because of the phosphorus in manure, and odor control. A composting system, such as biodrying, aids in odor control and decreases the amount of liquid manure spread, making the manure easier to handle and a potential product for off farm sale.

The process begins by taking manure directly from the barn and mixing it with an amendment, or drying material. Currently the Inmans use chopped hay and wood chips as the drying material. Then they use a heavy duty side-discharge manure

spreader to stack the mix in 4 ft.-high piles within the biodrying shed, which is 100 ft. long by 40 ft. wide.

The building is an open front structure with a curtain sidewall on the backside to protect from rain and snow. Air is forced through the piles through air channels in the floor. These air channels are designed to run the length of each manure pile and are spaced every 32 inches. The air channels are covered with sheet steel that have holes for blowing air through the piles. This process is referred to as a forced aeration system.

Twelve fans deliver the forced air through the pile. A computer-controlled system is used to manage the air flow based on compost temperature. The controls are adjustable but are generally set to run the fans for 5 minutes every hour within the first 3 days of composting. For the remainder of the first 2 weeks the fans are set for a minimum of 10 minutes an hour.

Additional storage for curing compost is provided on a pad next to the shed with rainwater runoff controls. Around the third week, the piles are sent through the mixer again, and then processed for another 3 weeks. By the 5th week, the compost is ready for the curing pile or to be spread on the farm's fields. When the process was working well, the compost was ready for sale in sometimes as few as 18 weeks. Ideally, the compost could be used as bedding or recycled as an amendment; however, the manure is typically not dry enough to be used for either function.

**MIXED RESULTS**

The expectations for the biodrying process were somewhat different from the actual outcome. The original plan was to put all of the manure from the barn through the system, but the drying material was simply too expensive and the manure too wet. So the Inmans composted only one-third of the

manure produced on the farm, resulting in fewer piles of compost, and leaving extra space in the biodrying shed.

They used this extra space for the drying material and the curing pile. Because less manure was used in the process, the curing pile could not reach the target height of 12 feet on the outside curing pad. In addition, since the pile was much smaller, it needed to be located in an enclosed area, such as the biodrying shed, to stay dry enough for sale.

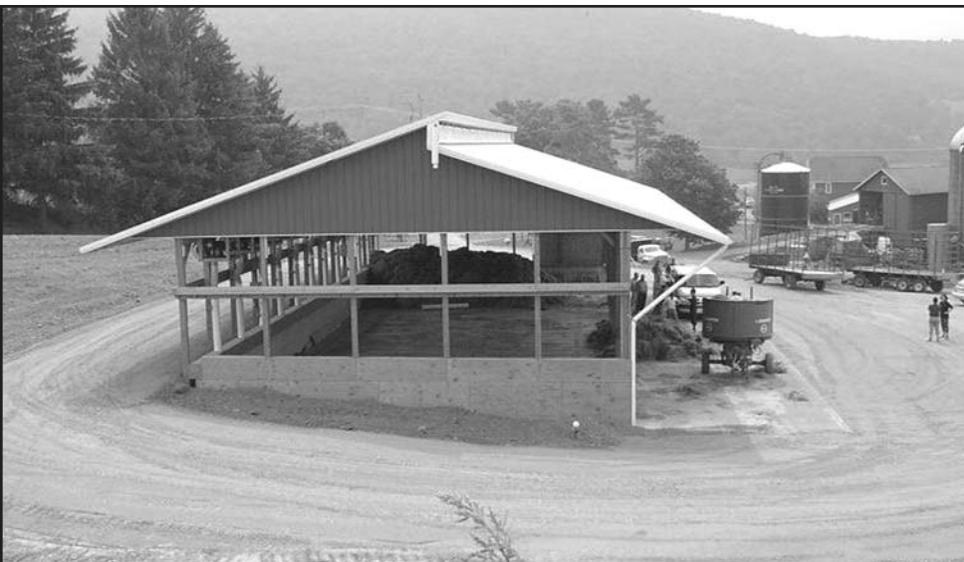
The manure and amendment mix was also expected to be about 70% moisture as it entered the pile and 40% moisture after it completed the biodrying cycle. At the Inman farm, the mix entering the shed was reduced to 60-65% moisture to help facilitate biodrying, but typically the process was only able to achieve a moisture content of 50-55% in the compost product.

In theory, the biodrying period is 21 days, which is much less compared to the drying time of a typical compost pile. "The idea of biodrying was to dry the manure more efficiently than conventional composting, especially in winter months," comments Scott Inglis, Research Support Specialist, PRO-Dairy Program, Cornell University.

Jean Bonhotal, Extension Associate in Crop and Soil Sciences, Cornell University, explains that "the compost is harder to dry in the winter because of the amount of humidity in the air, as well as the wind, snow and rain resulting in a lot of moisture around the piles."

Bonhotal adds that composting piles can take anywhere from 20 days to 6 months to compost depending on the mixture, air flow, and moisture of the pile. A pile that composts in only 20 days may still need 6 months before it is mature enough for use. "The biggest challenge is getting it dry,"

(Cont. on next page)



Caption: The biodrying shed.

Photographer: Scott Inglis



The Inman Family: (l to r) Mary, Brian, Kendra, Ginger the dog, Karen, Randy and Lynette Inman.



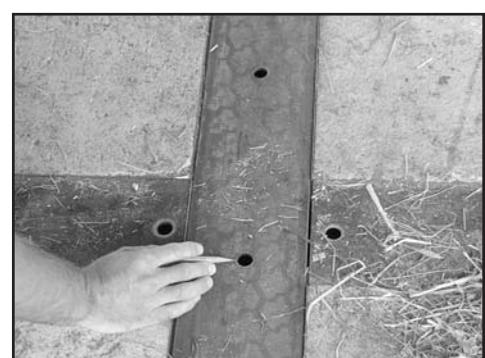
Randy spreading the compost mix into piles in the biodrying shed.



The biodrying shed before compost piles are stacked.



The office attached to the biodrying shed for computerized controls and readings.



The forced aeration system: the piping in the biodrying shed floor, with air holes for the forced air to move through the compost piles.

**FARMING OPPORTUNITIES****Evans Farmhouse Creamery: An Organic Success Story**

By M. Tye Wolfe

Dave Evans has lived on his family's dairy farm his whole life. But in 1999, he and his wife Sue made a dramatic change. They decided that Evans Farmhouse should process its own milk. Not only that, they would make the transition to certified organic products.

To many in their Chenango County, NY, community, Evans Farmhouse has demonstrated that a small dairy farm can not only adapt to changing times, but also develop its own successful niche market. The farm sits among the rolling hills just outside the downtown of Norwich, NY. Because they had lived in Norwich all their lives, the couple had a good idea of what their local community would support. They also hoped to make their hometown more health-minded.

The family began its creamery business in 1999 after receiving a one-year loan of a micro vat pasteurizer. He had applied the previous year to borrow the pasteurizer from the New Hampshire-based Small Farm Dairy Project, an organization that supports family dairying by assisting farmers in developing value-added enterprises. They began making maple-sweetened, European-style yogurt, for which Sue developed the recipe. This was a success, and they eventually purchased the micro vat pasteurizer. Pasteurization is conducted at 145 degrees for 30 minutes; the minimum required by regulations.

Last year they moved the operation to a larger on-farm facility. The farmhouse also processes milk for other dairy farms under the label of the farm's subsidiary, Sunrise Organic. "This is an incubator," Dave says, explaining that he enjoys helping other dairy farms develop their own products. GreenStar Cooperative Market, a 5000-

member consumer cooperative in Ithaca, was the first retailer to distribute Sunrise products. "GreenStar has been very supportive," Dave says.

Evans Farmhouse maintains its own retail store at the farm. Regular customers drop by, leave their money and take what they need. Dave and Sue say they have been gratified by the community response. Though their yogurt costs a little bit more than conventional brands, people appreciate the added value and the fact that it is locally made. The couple believes the biggest appeal to GreenStar customers is that the products are certified organic.

A particular advantage of having one's own creamery is that the producers of the milk are not anonymous to the consumer. And no longer is the farmer at the mercy of the large milk distributors, who may set punishingly low prices.

"The farmer is cut off from the buyer in the traditional market," explains Dave. Now he and other farmers can meet with the customers who enjoy their products. He says he welcomes questions and would enjoy having customers tour his farm.

The Evans family has 50 Jersey cows, whose higher-fat and protein milk is used for yogurt, and 50 Holsteins they use for bottled milk. Distinguishing their yogurt from many other brands is the fact that it is non-homogenized. A fine layer of rich cream sits atop each cup of yogurt, making the first scoop particularly tasty. Flavors include lemon, plain, blackberry and others.

Dave and Sue's on-farm creamery business is growing 10 to 15 percent per month. Dave says he had three goals before he made the transition: to preserve the farm should his kids want to continue the family

tradition; to help local agriculture; and to create a healthy product at a reasonable price. Five years after starting the creamery, they are well on their way toward reaching these goals.

**Tye Wolfe is a working member of GreenStar Cooperative Market, a 5000-member natural foods consumer cooperative in Ithaca, NY. Like many consumer coops, GreenStar buys substantial quantities from local farmers and food processing businesses. This article first appeared in the September, 2004 issue of GreenLeaf, the newsletter of GreenStar Cooperative Market.**



50 Jersey cows supply the milk for the European-style yogurts made at Evans Farmhouse Creamery.

**Resource Spotlight****The Small Dairy Project Offers Equipment Loans and Expertise for On-Farm Creameries**

The Small Dairy Project is a not-for-profit organization in New Hampshire that provides information, technical assistance and processing technologies to enhance the profitability of small commercial dairy farms. The SDP's Pasteurizer Lending Program helps small commercial dairies — like Evans Farmhouse Creamery — get into the processing business.

"We understand the frustration of finding approved equipment for goats and small herds of cows," says Courtney Haas, founder and Board President of the Small Dairy Project. The program makes one-year loans of its Micro Process Design vat pasteurizers and the modular filler and capper designed specially for this unit. The borrower signs a contract and pays a \$1,500 security deposit which is held in escrow until the end of the allotted time of one year. The Small Dairy Project keeps the interest accrued on this money to fur-

ther the program. All three of the SDP's loaner pasteurizing units are currently out on loan until the end of 2005.

"I had this pasteurizing unit designed for the SDP by a North Carolina company that also manufactures them," says Haase. "Then we began to sell them to people who didn't want to wait for a loaner." Haase has sold or loaned to units to farmers in Newfoundland, CA, New Hampshire, Maine, New York, Massachusetts, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Colorado, New Mexico, and North Carolina. The manufacturing company has now started its own pasteurizer lending program in North Carolina based on the New Hampshire model.

**For more information contact Courtney Haase at The Small Dairy Project, HC 65 Box 45, Bradford, NH 03221, 603-927-4176, nunsuch@conknet.com. Or visit <http://nunsuch.org>**

**Biodrying**

(Cont. from previous page)

adds Randy Inman. The weather has the largest affect on the piles and basically determines the outcome. Rainy months in the summer, as well as any snow drifting in the winter, add to the moisture of the pile. For this reason, the biodrying shed was designed with large eaves on the sides of the building to catch as much precipitation as possible, while still maintaining a very high and open building for the air to move around the piles. The process was designed for successful composting in the winter months, when it is hardest to dry the manure.

"One of the benefits is that biodrying is a great way to export phosphorus off of the farm," says Randy, when asked what were his goals for the project. Brian LaTourette (WAC) agrees on that matter completely, since one of WAC's main interests in the project is exporting phosphorus off-farm to protect the water sources in the New York City Watershed.

Some phosphorus is exported successfully off the farm, and the biodrying process does provide farmers with another manure management option. Although this farm's demonstration of the biodrying system has not met all expectations, other farms are encouraged to see if biodrying would be more suitable for conditions at their farm.

Randy says he would encourage other farmers to do it, especially if they can find a cheaper drying material and if the farm is in

an area with a good market for compost. Randy is now working with the WAC and Cornell staff to modify the system to make the composting process more effective.

Now when you sit down at the breakfast table with the Inman family and friends, you have an idea where some of the day's activities may lead them - the biodrying facility. The Inman family is one example of a dairy farm trying to address environmental concerns, while still managing a successful family business.

**Amanda Van Blarcom is a technical writer for the Cornell Manure Management Program, where she works with Extension Associate Brian Aldrich.**

**Resource Spotlight  
Manure Biodrying  
Resources**

For more information on the bio-drying process, feel free to contact any of the following resources:

**Mar-bil Farms**

Randy and Lynette Inman  
[www.marbilfarm.com](http://www.marbilfarm.com)  
607-832-4381

**Watershed Agricultural Council**

Karen Rauter  
[krauter@nycwatershed.org](mailto:krauter@nycwatershed.org)  
Brian LaTourette  
[blatourette@nycwatershed.org](mailto:blatourette@nycwatershed.org)  
[www.nycwatershed.org](http://www.nycwatershed.org)

Cornell Waste Management Institute  
Jean Bonhotal  
[Jb29@cornell.edu](mailto:Jb29@cornell.edu)  
(607) 255-8444

**Cornell Composting and Biodrying**

**Research Project**  
Scott Inglis, Department of Biological and Environmental Engineering  
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**SMALL FARMS UPDATE****Farms Expo Draws Over 3000!**

By Julie Berry

The fourth annual Small Farm and Rural Living Expo was held in New Paltz, NY on September 17 and 18. It provided the over 3,200 participants a toolbox of skills through workshops, a feast of local foods at a farmers market and a wealth of information from agriculture agency and educational institution booths.

Sixty-seven different workshops were offered, organized along seven different "tracks" — rural living, natural resources, commercial horticulture, business, risk management, equine and livestock, and live demonstrations. Topics included Introduction to Beekeeping; Exploring the Small Farm Dream; Value Added Lamb Production; Beef Production 101; and Pond Management.

"This really is a family event with an educational twist. It's an ag fair without the rides," said expo chair Les Hulcoop. Hulcoop planned the event along with staff from Cornell Cooperative Extension offices in Dutchess, Ulster, Orange and Sullivan counties in New York, as well as collaborators from New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The Cornell Small Farm Program is also a key partner.

While downpours and flooding from Hurricane Ivan dampened participation on Saturday, the crowds on Sunday made up for it. Mr. Hulcoop said he was pleased with attendance at the relatively new Expo event.

Workshops at the Expo provided basic information for start-up farm businesses. For example, on the first day Bob Mickel of Rutgers Cooperative Extension outlined a model where farmers purchase lambs in May and market in fall to friends and neighbors. This system allows producers to cut feed costs because pasture is available, limits facility needs, eliminates need for breeding stock and management such as shearing, breeding or lambing, and reduces capital investment.

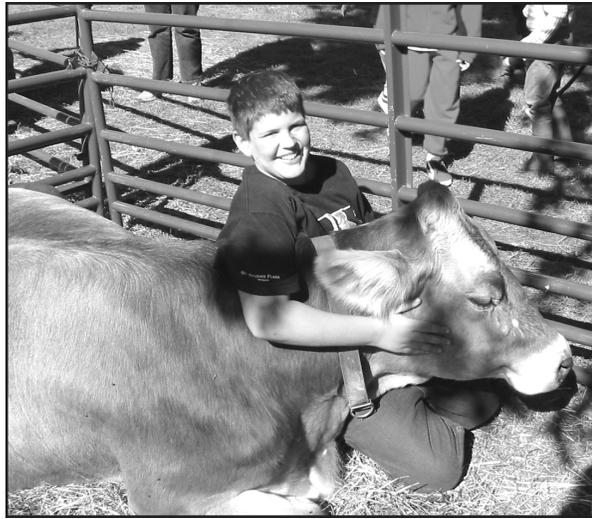
After projected costs of approximately \$200 per lamb (accounting for the purchase of the lamb, transportation and handling, feed, processing and harvesting), producers can gain maximum profit by selling halves of lamb, which yield about 25 pounds of meat. Mr. Mickel recommended that farmers start small, with six lambs, and sell halves for \$150

each. "It's designed for ease of operation and to demonstrate that you can make money," he said. "For most of the people in the model, selling the lamb is not the problem."

Beef producers also gain the most return from direct marketing, according to Beef Production 101 instructor Mike Baker, beef extension specialist at Cornell. Beef enterprises are generally most successful when the business complements another agriculture operation, such as vegetables. But baker warns that margins are extremely tight when selling beef commercially, with some studies reporting average profit of only \$14 a head. Demand, however, has steadily increased since 1997, especially for natural and pasture-raised beef, and supplies of beef in general are currently low.

For maximum profit, Dr. Baker recommends a strong vaccination program. "Those that spend the most money in drugs also tend to have the highest profit margins," he said.

A workshop on Exploring the Small Farm Dream attracted over 50 people, half of whom had no previous farm experience. Presenter Eric Toensmeier of the New England Small Farm Institute helped participants take a hard look at the resources and skills they should have. Discussion about fears, responsibilities, insurance, capital investment and crop failure provided focus to worksheets that helped participants evaluate their skills in whole-farm planning, business establishment, training, family and community relations, managing farm labor, managing tools, equipment and supplies, managing farm infrastructure, managing production, raising livestock, raising crops, marketing and annual farm business review and re-planning.



Thirteen year-old Andrew Mark cuddles up with his friend Pebbles during a quiet moment at the Expo. Andrew helps his dad with the petting zoo business.

Another worksheet helped participants identify physical resources of land, water, infrastructure, equipment, livestock and plant material. The Institute, which is located in Belchertown, Massachusetts, also provided a list of resources and books to explore the small farm dream.

The 2005 Small Farms and Rural Living Expo will be held September 16 and 17 in Newfoundland, Pennsylvania.

**Julie Berry is a Community Educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County.**

**FARM FOLLIES****The Shepherd and the Fop**

A shepherd was herding his flock in a remote pasture when suddenly a brand new BMW advanced out of the dust cloud towards him. The driver, a young man in a fancy suit, Gucci shoes, Ray Ban sunglasses and YSL tie, leaned out the window and asked the shepherd,

"If I tell you exactly how many sheep you have in your flock, will you give me one?" The shepherd looked at the man, obviously a yuppie, then looked at his peacefully-grazing flock and calmly answered, "Sure."

The yuppie parked his car, whipped out his IBM Thinkpad and connected it to a cell phone, then he surfed to a NASA page on the internet where he called up a GPS satellite navigation system, scanned the area, and then opened up a database and an Excel spreadsheet with complex formulas. He sent an email on his Blackberry and, after a few minutes, received a response. Finally, he prints out a 150 page report on his hi-tech, miniaturized printer then turns to the shepherd and says,

"You have exactly 1586 sheep".

"That is correct. You can have one of my sheep." said the shepherd.

He watches the young man select one of the animals and bundle it into his car.

Then the shepherd says, "If I can tell you exactly what your business is, will you give me back my sheep?"

"OK, why not," answered the young man.

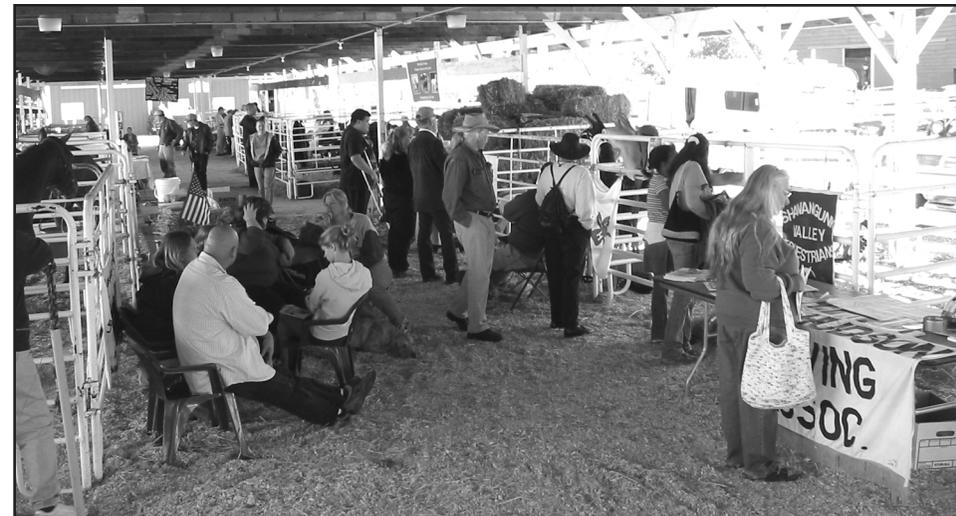
"Clearly, you are a consultant" said the shepherd.

"That's correct" says the yuppie, "but how did you guess that?"

"No guessing required," answers the shepherd. "You turned up here although nobody called you. You want to get paid for an answer I already knew, to a question I never asked, and you don't know squat about my business. Now give me back my dog."



Twin Maples Farm's petting zoo provided experienced entertainers! Photographer: Joanna Green



The Expo Livestock Pavilion featured all sorts of critters including these alpacas.



Free wagon rides were offered all day long courtesy of the Hudson Valley Draft Horse Association.

**ORGANIC FARMING****New Grant Awards Boost Cornell Organic Research**

**Organic/Sustainable Apple and Grape Production.** Ian A. Merwin, Department of Horticulture, has received three grants for research relating to organic and sustainable apple and grape production. The biggest is a grant for \$497,000 from the USDA-IREE program for research on bio-based management and microbial mechanisms of apple replant disease. The main goals of this research are: 1) To evaluate apple replant disease (ARD) resistance or tolerance among different clonal rootstocks; 2) To test the efficacy and economics of various preplant soil treatments and tree-

planting practices for replant disease control in orchards; 3) To test the resistance to soil-borne root pathogens in ten new and two commonly used apple rootstock clones; 4) To investigate possible mechanisms for rootstock disease resistance or tolerance by studying the differences and changes over time in soil microbial community structure in the rhizosphere of different apple rootstocks in various orchard soils mixtures and preplant soil treatments; and 5) To provide practical information and strategies for biologically-based management of ARD without the need for soil fumigation.

Merwin also received a one-year grant for \$9,900 from the Toward Sustainability Foundation to begin a long-term systems comparison of organically grown vs. integrated fruit production (IFP) 'Liberty' apples. The study will compare tree health, soil quality, production costs, nutritional and nutraceutical fruit quality, and consumer preferences under the two systems. IFP is the main system now for fruit production in Europe, New Zealand, and elsewhere around the world. It is essentially a hybrid production system that involves bio-intensive IPM and some aspects of organics,

requires ecologically based orchard design and management, and prohibits the use of many pesticide formulations. This experiment is located at Cornell's Ithaca orchard.

Finally, Merwin received a one-year grant of \$18,000 from the USDA's Eastern Viticulture Consortium and the New York Wine Grape Foundation, to evaluate several geotextile mulches and a composted hardwood bark mulch in three local vineyards/wineries (Sheldrake Point, Wagners, and Silver Thread). Our objective is to evaluate non-chemical methods of weed suppression, and reflective mulches that increase sunlight within the grapevine canopy in order to improve the wine-making quality of Cabernet Franc.

For more information about organic/sustainable apple and grape production, contact Ian Merwin at [im13@cornell.edu](mailto:im13@cornell.edu).

**Organic Dairy.** Linda Garrison-Tikofsky of Cornell's College of Veterinary Medicine has received two grants for research relating to organic milk production. The first is a grant of \$14,800 from the Organic Farmers Research Foundation for a longitudinal comparison of conjugated linoleic acid levels in organic, conventional grazing, and conventional confinement dairy herds. This study will follow bulk milk levels of CLA, fat, protein, and somatic cell counts in twenty herds over the course of a year.

She also received \$580,668 from USDA-CREES with matching funds from Cornell University and 9,000 from Alltech, Inc for a total of 1.1 million for a study of The Transitioning Dairy: Identifying and Addressing Challenges and Opportunities in Milk Quality and Safety. This study will follow five Northeast Dairy herds from the second year of transition (one year prior to animal transition) through the first year of organic production (three years total) and will look at udder health (mastitis dynamics), milk quality, milk selenium, CLA's, and bulk milk foodborne pathogens. It will help to develop educational sessions and information to help future farmers as they make the transition.

For more information about this research contact Linda Garrison-Tikofsky at [lg40@cornell.edu](mailto:lg40@cornell.edu). Linda is currently looking for farms that might qualify for the transition study, so please let her know if you have suggestions.

**Organic Grain and Vegetable Production Systems.** Researchers Charles L. Mohler, George Abawi, Leslie Allee, Anusuya Rangarajan, Janice Thies and Brian Caldwell received a grant for a

(Cont. on next page)

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**HOME AND FAMILY**

# Which Comes First? The Family or the Farm?

By Don R. Rogers

Sometimes a farmer will challenge me: "Which comes first, the family or the farm?" They think that, as a businessman involved with farm financing and management, I'll have to say "the farm" - but it's not that simple. A business is a tool to foster the family as a unit. The family really comes first. When a business starts destroying a family, you end up having neither.

Now that doesn't mean that there are no long days, or that you all eat supper at the same time every night. But the business doesn't always have to come first. The rigors of farming should not mean that you can't make time to do things together as a family. This just represents one of the challenges when you choose the career of farming.

**THE FARM FAMILY IS A CYCLE**

Working with family members is considered risky business in many occupations. Only ten percent of family businesses make it

into the third generation. If you want your family business to be successful, today and in succeeding generations, you need to invest in the next generation as your people replacement program - and the first person you should groom a replacement for is you!

Some of our urban friends fantasize about country life. They picture three generations working together in perfect harmony... perhaps! But it doesn't happen without everyone's positive efforts. And it starts with you. How do you mix business and family productivity?

**ATTITUDE**

Low prices, bad weather, scarce labor, more regulations - "they all come with the territory," even my upbeat farm clients would say. Agriculture is a tough business to be in, so I would ask them how they could stay so cheerful. The response? "If you choose farming as your career, you accept all the things that come with farming. I accept the challenges that go with

the ups and downs of agriculture and I look forward to every day as an opportunity."

Mixing family with business can be as difficult as mixing oil and water, but it can be a tremendous asset. Attitude often makes the difference. I knew of a son who got to the point where he told his father, "either improve your attitude or I leave. It isn't any fun farming with you."

**MAKE FAMILY UNIT YOUR TOP PRIORITY**

One of the greatest values of having an agricultural business is the opportunity to have your family involved. The appeal of farm life is not that it is easy, but that the environment is both free and close and it can produce happy children and productive, mature adults.

Occasionally I come across situations where family operations could benefit from some skilled counseling, or at least facilitated communication, to improve working relationships. But there are many situations in

which just paying a little more attention to what is affecting your family and business relationships could yield great dividends.

Here are some suggestions for strengthening your family and business "mix".

Start with your spouse. You first priority is your marriage partner. Professor David Kohl says, "Business stress is the number one factor for divorces over 40 on a farm business. If spouses can't live and work together, the rest of the family and your business will be affected." Ideally, you both want the best for each other. If not, see if you can improve your relationship and build common goals. If your relationship is already strong, continue to provide for quality time together on a weekly basis, without the kids! This should be something away from the farm.

Spend quality time with your children while they are young. What you do with your children before they are teenagers shapes your relationship with them for the rest of your lives! This not only means attending their functions, but being an active participant and cheerleader. Let them tag along when you do farm tasks. It may take a little

(Cont. on next page)

## Awards

(Cont. from previous page)

systems research and education partnership for increased competitiveness of organic grain and vegetable farms. Recent research on exemplary organic farms in the Northeast identified a vegetable and a grain farm with particularly successful systems. These farms achieve good yields and have low weed, insect and pathogen problems, despite minimal off-farm inputs. The strategy of this project is to demonstrate that these farming systems can be duplicated and compare them with improved systems worked out through collaboration between the farmers and researchers. The goals of the project are (1) to improve the overall health and competitiveness of organic farms, especially during transition and the first few succeeding years, (2) to determine experimentally how organic soil and nutrient management affects weed, insect and pathogen pressure and (3) to develop these cropping systems experiments as "living laboratory courses" for training extension personnel and organic farmer-

mentors. The vegetable and grain systems experiments and an on-farm satellite trial will be regularly sampled for soil nutrients, soil physical structure, soil biota, insect pests and beneficials and weeds. The system experiments will be used as field teaching laboratories in conjunction with distance learning tools to train extension personnel in organic systems and to broaden the knowledge of organic farmers that act as mentors to other growers.

**Weed Ecology and Management.** Antonio DiTommaso and Charles Mohler in the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences have received a grant to produce a manual and extension program on weed ecology and ecological weed management. Integrated management of weeds is information intensive, but information on the biology and ecological management of weeds is not readily available to growers. This project will make such information readily available through two objectives. First, a manual will describe the ecological behavior of the 75 principal agricultural weeds in the north-

eastern U.S., (b) facilitates the identification of these weeds, (c) provides information on cultural and mechanical methods for weed control, and (d) relates the specifics of weed management methods to the ecological vulnerabilities of each weed. Second, a program of talks and workshops will introduce growers and extension field personnel to the use of the manual.

**Organic Seed Partnership.** Molly Jahn in the Department of Plant Breeding has received a grant from the National Research Initiative for \$896k for the Organic Seed Partnership. The Partnership will enhance and expand a set of existing complementary, regionally-focused activities to create a strong national network aimed at developing and delivering improved vegetable varieties for organic systems. Achieving this goal requires both new varieties and improved capacity to produce large quantities of commercial grade seed. This project integrates participatory farm-based crop breeding and selection activities in organic systems, supported by

regional research centers that ensure the early engagement of growers, consumers and seed companies.

The focus of this project is on vegetable species because of the paramount importance of vegetables in organic farming systems and because of the relative value of these products for the businesses that engage in organic agriculture. This federated approach builds upon a successful model for integrating public sector research/education with the capacity offered by farmer-based non-profit organizations and small businesses. Furthermore, curriculum development opportunities that arise as a consequence of basing our trial hubs at schools will be addressed by cooperators who will be able to demonstrate to students trialing strategies, organic agricultural production and farmer-based participatory trialing and selection. Finally, the Organic Seed Partnership represents an effective strategy to harness national research and education capacity for locally and regionally-defined needs.

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more time and cause you to pay more attention to farm safety measures, but this "shared history" will pay off in a major way. Every child should have chores to teach them responsibility, but pay them for their work. This gives them a respect for that labor and will later help them understand it as a career.

Treat kids like adults when they graduate from college. Your children in the business are not "kids" anymore. They need to have a personal, private lifestyle, separate from their business. Encouraging them to work off the farm for a year can ease this transition. It's best if young people to try out their newly discovered zest for life and pick up knowledge in a different work place. Those who do and return to the home farm arrive with more confidence and maturity, and both parent and child have had time to

shed the "my little baby" syndrome. Those who go directly to work on the home farm after school need to do so under a different set of rules, including separate living quarters, a job description, regular compensation and benefits, and no special favors. The latter is especially important if you have other employees.

Relative to their work, give them their own responsibilities so that they can see results. Practice being a coach, rather than a controller. Micro-managing any business is dangerous, not only for the manager's health but also the future of the business. For one thing, micro-managers do not develop successors. Unfortunately, they keep the lid on developing the capabilities of those around them. So, communicate in an open and positive way. If your business makes money, show your progeny how.

Regardless, let them try to help you increase profitability. Early on, develop a plan or process for bringing them into the management team and ownership of business assets.

Stay in touch with your non-farm children. They are rooting for farm siblings - and are more in tune with them than you think. They may even surprise you and come back. Two good ways to relate is by e-mail (what a convenience for busy parents and children!) and fostering the tradition of family reunions or hosting a family "retreat" each year away from the farm. By the way, have your estate plans in order - and tell everyone what they are - so that all can relax. This may take a little consultation as well as soul searching, but is an area that should be openly understood among all family members and interested parties.

Treat your employees well. And that means treat them like family because they chose to work in a family business. Show outward appreciation of their work, be proud of them, compensate them fairly, and educate them so they can do their jobs better. Most of all listen to them and involve them in decisions in their work areas.

Don't forget yourself. Have something you love to do besides farming. It will help you look forward to setting your retirement date. If you can, involve family in that non-business passion.

Remember, family is your most important product!

**Don Rogers now acts as a farm business consultant, having retired from a position with First Pioneer Farm Credit in Enfield, Connecticut.**

**PRODUCTION AND MANAGEMENT**

# Getting the Most From Big Round Bales – Look Back & Plan Ahead

By Bill Henning

Some of this year's best haying weather actually occurred in September. That says something about the weather. As this season draws to a close it might be a good time to reflect and begin planning now for next year.

While there is justifiably a lot of interest in making hay crop silage in some form, dry hay remains perhaps the most affordable way of putting up hay for many small-scale producers. Where a small group of animals is involved, putting out a large round bale of hay crop silage will usually result in some spoilage before all the forage is consumed. Not only will the haylage be wasted, animal performance will most likely suffer. Feeding dry hay circumvents this potential problem.

One problem often related to hay making is the associated labor. The advent of the large round bale has been a "revolution" in hay making, especially where labor is con-

cerned. However, while large round bales have been used to make dry hay for thirty plus years, we still see management practices that are costly, not only in forage lost, but also in decreased animal production.

Here are a few considerations that can improve the profitability of round bale management:

Round bale hay should be drier. The safe upper limit on moisture for small square bales (assuming no acid treatment) is 20%. That upper limit drops to 18% for round bales. That difference seems trivial but small square bales cure easier, even in a mow. Ignoring that difference can result in a significant increase in mold.

Slow down to bale faster. It's possible to drive pretty fast while round-baling. Driving fast reduces the amount of revolutions of the bale before the bale chamber is full. While the resulting bale is full sized it is not as dense. More bales will need to be made

in order to harvest the same amount of hay. Since tying each bale takes time, driving slower can actually speed up baling.

Storage. Storing dry hay indoors, regardless how it is made, remains the preferred method for reducing storage losses. Allowing round bales to cure outside before storing inside will reduce the likelihood of mold. If you must store the hay outside, a well-drained, breezy area is a necessity. Stuffing bales in a hedgerow just invites rot. Tarps or sleeves are often the next best thing to storage in a building. The net wrap option available on so many round balers has proven to be an effective deterrent to moisture when bales are adequately wrapped. However, net wrap adds to the cost of a baler and can cost several dollars per bale for the net. That's worth it if you're making enough bales to justify the cost.

Twine- the small farmer's net

wrap. An alternative to net wrap is simply placing more twine wraps on the bale. Twine spacing of about two inches results in a very tight, uniform thatch that can be very effective in repelling moisture. Plastic twine works better than sisal, since it won't rot. Close twine wrapping requires no optional equipment on the baler, costs pennies per bale, and takes just a few extra seconds during wrapping.

Next summer will be perfect. Adequate soaking rain will fall in the appropriate evenings punctuated by four-day intervals of dry, sun filled days wafted with balmy breezes. I also have a bridge for sale.

**Bill Henning and his wife Kathleen operate a grass-based beef and sheep farm in the Finger Lakes region of New York. He is also the Small Farms Specialist with PRO-DAIRY/CCE-NWNY Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Team.**



Four common causes of lost profits: Bales rotting in hedgerow; bales barely wrapped with twine — poor weather protection; bales from last cutting are still in the way when this cutting was begun; forage under bales left in field has been killed.



Hindsight is 20/20 when it comes to managing hay.



The small farmer's net-wrap: Two inch twine spacing increases moisture resistance. Photographer: Bill Henning

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# Small Farm Quarterly Youth Pages

## The Day Goats Flew

By Erica L. Masler, River Valley 4-H Club, Cortland County, NY, age 14

Maybe pigs can't fly, but goats can! I saw it happen...to two of my very own goats. I live on a 50-acre hobby farm, called Just4Fun, in Cortland. My family and I currently own sixteen goats and four pigs. We also have borrowed two heifers, Holstein and Jersey, for our county fair. I work with goats a lot, and take care of them all year round.

I've learned from my mom to make many delicious foods from their milk. We make cheeses like Italian, dill, onion, ricotta, and feta (great with crackers and salads). Another favorite is homemade goat's milk ice cream, made in different flavors like vanilla and coffee. It's so rich from the butterfat, but really yummy and a hit among many friends. Lastly, but certainly not least, my mom makes a cheese-cake made with the homemade ricotta for our birthday breakfast. We never need a fruit topping because it's so delicious. Many teachers have also enjoyed devouring this simple masterpiece.

I really enjoy showing goats at our county fair. Weeks of preparation go into this: leading the animals, clipping them, washing them, etc. Fair week is exciting, but busy, and very tiring. However, I get a sense of satisfaction from seeing my hard work pay off. Goats are a very big and important part of my life, especially those early morning chores!

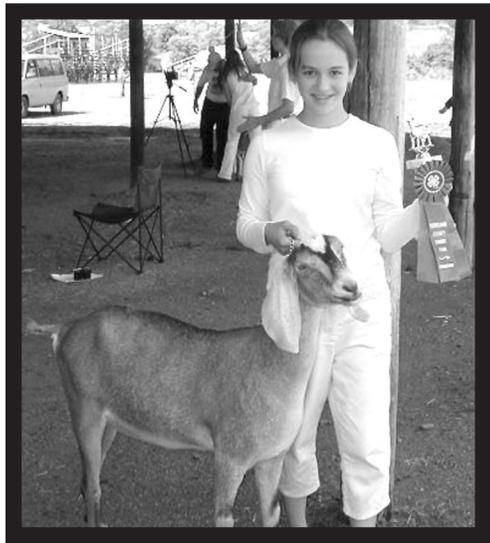
We breed the goats that are old enough so they kid, or give birth, in the spring. This past spring we had seventeen new babies! I enjoy helping with the actual birthing, dipping the umbilical cord in iodine and bottle-feeding them. They slurp milk all down themselves and me. They bond really well to humans because of the bottle-feeding. Once they are old enough they bound, jump, and run after us with their bodies twisting and ears flapping. They're so cute! They'll fall in love with anyone who shows them love and attention.

Because we couldn't keep all of our babies we advertised to sell them. My mom's cousin was interested in buying two baby does, and we were more than happy to sell. The problem was, she and her family live in Minnesota! How should we get them there? My mom came up with an idea. "Why don't we fly them out?" she asked. That is what we did. My mom bought a large pet crate. She put food and water in it, attached a "LIVE ANIMALS" sticker on it, and drove to Syracuse with the two does. She says they didn't make two peeps on the way to the airport. They were very well behaved about the whole thing. After putting them on the airplane, Mom came home, and we all waited for news of their successful flight.

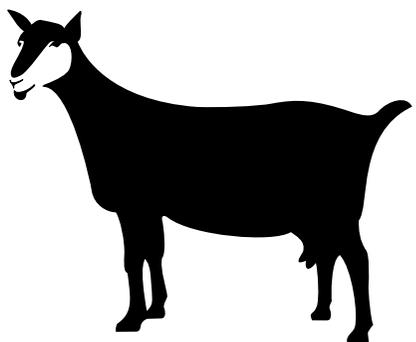
My mom's cousin called when they had made it safely, and they were still calm and quiet. Our goats had flown to Minnesota! Also, later that night, our cousin's son, Nicholas, called - he was very excited about the goats: they followed him across the lawn, they ate out of his hand, they sniffed his ear and nibbled at his hair and other little things.

I just smiled when I heard that. It's those little things that have enriched my life so much. I'm very blessed to have the opportunity to have goats and spread the joy they bring to other people who buy them or just come to visit. Flying two out to Minnesota was certainly an exciting experience - for me and all others involved. I wonder if my pigs are next...

Erica is a 5-year member of 4-H who has owned goats for seven years. For more information, visit the website of the American Dairy Goat Association: <http://www.adga.org>.



Erica won the Master Showmanship class at last year's Cortland County Junior Fair. Photo taken by Carleton Potter



## Sugaring Off

By Lacey Pitman, Marathon Maple Sugars 4-H Club, Cortland County, NY, age 14

Does maple syrup sound good to you? Well then, step into my backyard and you'll see how it's really made and how good it tastes. Tapping starts at the beginning of February, and ends about March. The nights have to be cold and the days have to be warm. The warm days are good for the sapping season because the warm days will unthaw the tree so the sap will run well.

We tap a sugar maple by using a drill to make a hole, 7/16" in diameter and 1 1/2" deep. A stainless steel "spile" with a hook is tapped into the hole, so a bucket with a lid can hang from the tree. One tap hole in a tree will produce 15 gallons of sap a year, and a little more than a quart of syrup. It takes about 42 gallons of sap to make 1 gallon of maple syrup. Sap is a clear liquid, and it is sweet — the sugar content is about 2 1/2%.

As an alternative, you can use tubing for the sap to run. Tubing is a new product that is better for a tree. The tubing is an easier product, because you don't have to go to every tree to collect sap. It stretches, so line won't break and you don't have any damage to the buckets. When hooking tubing up, you take the drill to the tree and drill a hole in the tree. Then you put the plastic spile with your tubing in the tree. We collect it in a big stainless steel tank so that we can take the sap home to boil it.



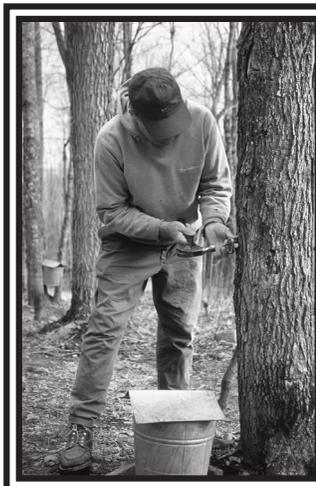
Sugar maple leaf.

Photo from public web pages



Lacey Pitman and friend Melissa Marshall in Boston with Teen Council.

Photo by Sydney McEvoy



Tapping the spile into the tree. Photo from public web pages

We only use buckets and spiles on our front lawn, and we only use tubing in the woods (it's way easier in the woods). In one of the areas that we tap we have a vacuum pump. A vacuum pump is a device that is used to suck the sap out of the trees, and it gathers more at one time - fast and easy! We then collect the sap into a big stainless steel tank.

All the sap from trees that have been tapped needs to be gathered up and brought to the sap house. The sap is pumped into a big tank so that we can boil it. Sap needs to boil down to make the light color of syrup. To cook the sap we use wood. It will take one face cord of wood to make about 10-12 gallons of syrup. How hot is the sap when it is boiled? When the sap is boiled, it is over 500°F. Believe me, it's hot!

Maple syrup has a grading system. Grade A can be Light Amber, Medium Amber, or Dark Amber. Cooking the syrup down more makes maple sugar candy. For my family, it has taught everyone about teamwork and having fun. Our operation is similar to many other maple syrup operations, and we have been making maple syrup since 1990. We tap around 500 to 1,000 trees. My hometown of Marathon, NY is the home of the Maple Festival. We do not sell our maple syrup at the Maple Festival, but we sell it at our home.

Lacey is a five-year club member and 4-H Teen Council member. For more information visit the Cornell Sugar Maple Research and Extension Program at <http://maple.dnr.cornell.edu>.



# The Dairy Princess Program Inspires Youth To Be Their Best

By Tess Campbell, Cincy Country Kids 4-H Club, Cortland County, NY, age 18

As I sat on a Boeing 757 last week, I thought to myself how hard it is going to be for me to hand down my title as the 2003-2004 Cortland County Dairy Princess. This past year has been one of the most inspirational times of my life. I have promoted the dairy industry and learned a lot in the process. I know, too, that the pride I feel for the industry will continue to be shared.

As a dairy princess I have attended many events in support of the dairy industry, sold "GOT MILK?" merchandise items at venues like our Junior Fair, Empire Farm Days, The Great New York State Fair, and the Marathon Maple Festival. I have spoken with many children in grades Pre-K through 12 and have even served the infamous "milk punch" to adults in senior centers.

At the 2004 New York State Dairy Princess Pageant I was named "Miss Congeniality," chosen by the princesses participating in the pageant as the girl with the best spirit throughout the competition and overall the friendliest. This was a great honor, and I am proud to



Tess Campbell at the 2003 Dairy Parade.



Tess Campbell teaching students.

have been recognized. It has been a great year and a great learning opportunity...being Dairy Princess has inspired me to be my best. Now....don't forget to have your 3 servings a day!

**Tess has been a 4-H member for nine years, and will attend SUNY Cobleskill this fall, majoring in Animal Husbandry. For more information about dairy check out [www.3aday.org](http://www.3aday.org) and [www.dairyinfo.com](http://www.dairyinfo.com).**

## From Cortland to Washington... The 4-H Way

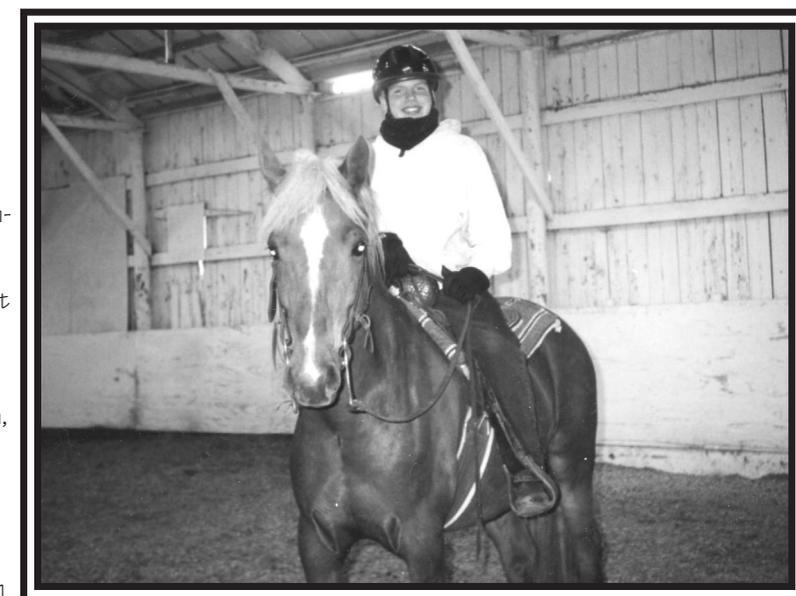


Jeff (third from left) and the New York State delegation to the 2004 National 4-H Conference in Washington, D.C.

By Jeffery Oscar Penoyer, 4-H Teen Council Member, Cortland County, NY, age 18

I've been involved in 4-H since my mother started a club called "The Energizers" when I was very young. After a few years I became an independent member, then joined a countywide horse club and then teen council. In each case 4-H has impacted my life - I've learned new skills, served our community and taken on many leadership opportunities.

Just recently I was selected to represent New York State at the 2004 National 4-H Conference. I was one of six delegates from New York who participated in this conference. Three hundred and fifty youth represented the United States, including 4-H in Guam and Puerto Rico, plus Canada, and Japan. It was awesome!



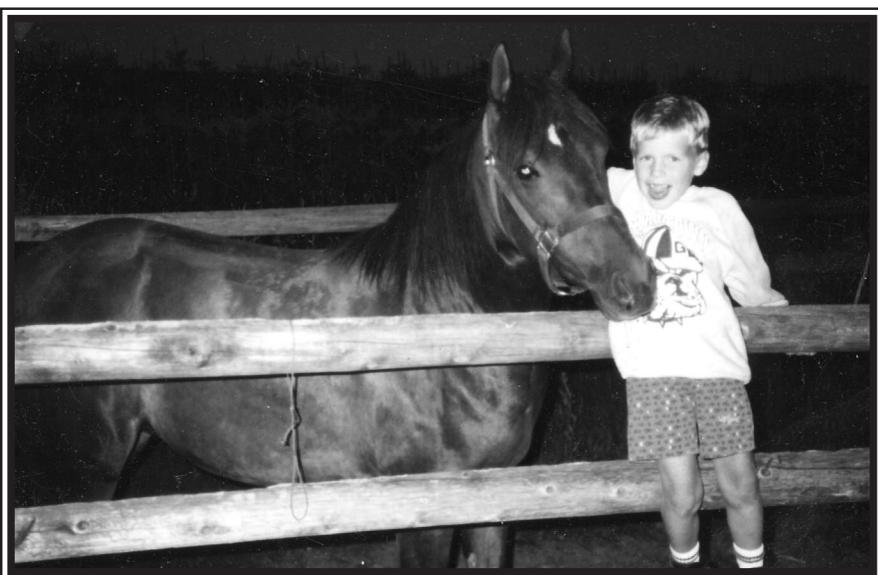
Jeff and Snicker circa 1992.

While at the conference, I participated in many workshops and assemblies. I was given the chance to learn about success, leadership, youth and adult partnerships, youth and governance, responsibility, the government, and 4-H around the world. While in Washington, we visited Capitol Hill to talk with government officials about what they could do to help keep the spirit of the clover alive. We also talked with other youth and adults about changes that could be made to the 4-H program, and we shared ideas with each other to help perfect the 4-H operates in our communities.

During our trip we also were taken to a dinner theatre, states' night out dinner, Clover Ball (formal dance), and many other events. This seven-day trip was filled with excitement, energy, and the voices of youth from around the world. I traveled with teens from across New York, I roomed with people from Ohio and Oregon, and I worked with 350 other individuals. I had never met any of them before the trip.

4-H has meant everything to me, and has been a long-lasting family tradition. It serves over seven million youth just in the United States, offering opportunity beyond the imagination.

**Jeff will attend Ithaca College this fall. For more information on the National 4-H Conference, go to <http://www.4-h.org/2004conf/>.**



Jeff at work with a horse.

### Save The Dates! January 29 & 30, 2005

**ATTENTION YOUTH!!!!** The Northeast Organic Farming Association-NY Annual Conference will hold educational and fun programs for children on January 29 & 30, 2005 in Syracuse. There will be workshops and opportunities for children and teens to share their projects and have fun! Visit [www.nofany.org](http://www.nofany.org) or phone 607-652-NOFA for a registration brochure.

The Youth Page is written by and for young people. Many thanks to the 4-H Teen Ambassadors in Delaware County, NY, for most of the material in this issue. We believe there's a bright future for young farmers in the Northeast. Whether you live on a farm or only wish you did, we'd love to hear from you! Write to:

SFQ Youth Pages  
 c/o Celeste Carmichael  
 4-H Youth Development Program Specialist  
 CCE State 4-H Youth Development Office  
 340 Roberts Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853  
 607-255-4799 • [cjc17@cornell.edu](mailto:cjc17@cornell.edu)

**MARKETING**

# Direct Marketing from Farms to Restaurants

By Christy Piper and Steven Wolf

Direct marketing from farms to restaurants is receiving increased attention for good reason. As Americans change their eating habits and eat more meals away from home, there are exciting opportunities for farmers to sell in new ways to new kinds of customers. Selling to restaurants can cut out middlemen such as wholesalers, brokers and processors, and allow farmers to get top dollar for their products. Restaurants add tremendous value to the food they purchase. Farmers supplying quality ingredients in ways that fit into restaurants' operations can capture some of this added value.

In thinking about selling directly to restaurants, it pays to consider the benefits and costs from their point of view. University research shows that chefs and restaurant managers see the availability of fresher, higher quality food product as the most attractive part of purchasing from local sources. They also like the option of buying small quantities of some items.

They value the way in which specialty products from farmers — heirloom varieties of tomatoes or exotic products such as buffalo — allow them to stand out from the crowd and attract customers. Local farmers often can deliver regional specialties, which restaurant managers find to be a way to add fun and interest to the business. Lastly, chefs enjoy buying from people they know so they have confidence the food they serve is safe.

Table 1 summarizes research results on factors that discourage restaurants from buying directly from farmers. Farmers seeking to sell to restaurants must be prepared to address these concerns. What we learn here is that farmers must clearly state what they are going to do and then follow through.

Several regional initiatives exist in the Northeast to support farmers market directly to restaurants. These cooperative networks aim to help groups of farmers, restaurants, and supporting organizations work together to make business connections. In order to highlight the investments others have made to enhance opportunities for farmers to sell directly to local restaurants, we briefly describe efforts in Massachusetts, Vermont, and New York State.

**BERKSHIRE GROWN**

Berkshire Grown is a community-based organization supporting local food and farms since 1985 in western Massachusetts. Berkshire Grown is comprised of members representing farmers, food processors, chefs, restaurants, tourism, business owners, and media, as well as community members. The Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture, University of Massachusetts Extension, Berkshires Visitors Bureau, a coalition of land trusts, and the environmental community provide support for the organization.

The mission of Berkshire Grown is "to support and promote locally based agriculture as a vital part of a healthy Berkshire economy and landscape. We pursue this mission by creating and expanding markets for locally grown products; by establishing local food and farm networks; by increasing public awareness

through education and outreach; and by encouraging supportive agricultural programs and public policies."

The organization works to enhance connections between local farmers and restaurants. They maintain an up-to-date membership directory and Internet website to help farmers and restaurants to find one another. They work to educate farmers, chefs, restaurant patrons and visitors about the organization through advertising and promoting their logo. Monthly, from June to October, Berkshire Grown faxes or emails a listing of the products offered by farmers to member restaurants. Berkshire Grown also hosts networking meeting for farmers and chefs to meet and make deals for the coming growing season.

**VERMONT FRESH NETWORK**

The Vermont Fresh Network (VFN) is a statewide organization founded in 1995 in order to "build innovative partnerships among farmers, chefs, and consumers to strengthen Vermont's agriculture." VFN's goals are to improve the state's agricultural economy and heritage, the rural landscape and tourism, local food businesses, and the cuisine of the region. Its members are farmers, food processors, distributors, chefs, restaurants, restaurant associations, and Vermont businesses.

Vermont Fresh Network acts as a broker for producers and buyers by sharing information and facilitating connections between farmers and chefs. All member partners are listed in the Vermont Fresh Network catalogue of products. In addition, each restaurant, farm, or organization is listed in a Dining Guide, which includes notes on eating seasonally and a map of participating restaurants. Fifteen thousand Dining Guides are printed and circulated each year in Vermont.

In a recent Vermonter poll, Vermont Fresh had a high level of recognition, with 29% of Vermonters stating they have heard of the organization. In addition, Vermont was named the "coolest food state" in the January/February issue of *Saveur* magazine, due in part to the Vermont Fresh Network. Reaching out to tourists and locals has helped farmers and restaurants build successful business relations.

**FINGER LAKES CULINARY BOUNTY**

Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty (FLCB) of central New York is focused on enhancing local agriculture, growing the local tourism and wine industries, and promoting local businesses. Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty's vision is to make the Finger Lakes region "renowned for unique regional cui-

sine based on fresh, seasonal locally grown and made ingredients paired with the region's excellent wines to offer an extraordinary culinary experience that enhances tourism and contributes to the economic well being of area farms, food producers, wineries, businesses, and communities."

FLCB represents fourteen counties and includes farmers, food producers, wineries, chefs, restaurants, tourism business owners, media, and residents of the Finger Lakes region. FLCB is supported by Cornell Cooperative Extension, Tourism Bureaus, NY Farms!, Farm Bureaus, County Planning and Economic Development Agencies, and Chambers of Commerce.

The main objective of FLCB is to facilitate linkages between producers and buyers in the Finger Lakes region. All members are included in the organization's directory. In addition, the directory includes guidelines for both parties in order to successfully do business together. These guidelines define the minimum amount of locally produced food and wines restaurant members must include on their menu. The organization promotes consumers' awareness of their organization and their members through display of promotional signs and logos. Every December, FLCB holds networking meetings for farmers and chefs.

**CONCLUSIONS**

• Regional organizations can act as matchmakers between farmers and restaurants, enhance communication and consumer education, and coordinate ordering and delivery of farm products to restaurants.

• Networks engaged in supporting direct marketing by farmers to restaurants engage state government agencies, universities, Extension, and community organizations.

• Direct marketing by farmers selling to restaurants is a critical component of a larger trend of potentially great importance to small farms. Regional development is increasingly focused around tourism, recreation, environmental quality and rural culture. Local farmers can play a central role in these plans, particularly if they are organized to cooperate with one another and with local businesses.

Christy Piper recently received an M.P.S. degree from Cornell University in Natural Resources and Rural Development. Steven Wolf is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Natural Resources at Cornell.

## Resource Spotlight Farm-to-Restaurant Networks

For more information on direct marketing to restaurants contact:

**Berkshire Grown**

Phone Number: (413) 528-0041

Website: [www.berkshiregrown.com](http://www.berkshiregrown.com)**Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty**

Phone Number: (607) 272-2292

Website: [www.fingerlakesculinarybounty.org](http://www.fingerlakesculinarybounty.org)**Vermont Fresh Network**

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**Marketing to Restaurants: Challenges and Keys to Success**

Restaurants' Concern	% considering this concern to be critical	Key to success for farmers seeking to sell to restaurants
Distribution & delivery	43	Get the right product to the right place at the right time
Product availability	24	Do not promise what you cannot deliver
Pricing	23	Offer competitive prices or think about growing something else
Information on supply	21	If they do not know you have it, they cannot buy it (marketing)
Complexity	19	Be sensitive to problems restaurants face when dealing with multiple suppliers
Quality	11	Bring your best to market and describe products clearly

(Adapted from "Approaching Restaurants with Locally Grown Products," Food Processing Center, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 2003.)

**PRODUCTION & MANAGEMENT**

# Using Those Resources Wisely

By Brent Buchanan, Animal Science Specialist

While I was growing up I remember — once I could read — realizing what the sign at the end of the driveway said. After all, I had years to study it as I waited for the bus at my parent's farm. The sign said, "Eastland Dairy - Milk, Cream, Eggs".

I knew we only sold milk; we sold it to stores, conference centers, and households. We sold it in plastic half gallons mostly, and in 20-quart dispenser cans for the conference center kitchen deliveries. But I knew we didn't sell cream or eggs. When I asked my parents about this, they replied that the previous owners sold all three items both at the farm and on a home-delivery route.

But soon after my parents took over the farm in the mid-50's, they realized they were better off concentrating on a more limited dairy aspect and only produced and processed milk from then on. So, by 1955 or so (a long time before I was born), the cream separator and the chickens hit the road.

This era was considered by many to be the hey-day of dairy farming in this country. Efficiency was up, prices were good, demand was high, and new technologies in

agriculture were being rapidly adopted. Further diversification was not as important anymore because producing milk was typically the better profit center and concentrating in that area was financially wise. Now, let's fast-forward nearly 50 years.

Today, certainly it is still wise to concentrate on your primary agricultural enterprise, whether that's a dairy operation, replacement heifers, or whatever you do. As we all know, though, the dairy industry nationally has had some hard times. Prices for wholesale milk are most often low, regulations have come about that require additional cash outlays for many operations, property and other taxes certainly haven't come down lately and expenses, like fuel costs, have sky-rocketed. Agricultural producers have been wedged firmly in between, receiving lower prices and paying higher bills.

No industry can withstand this process for long, but thankfully, farmers are more resilient than most, I think. We need to do what we can to help our region use its agricultural resources wisely, maybe even diversify some for a time in order to protect our infrastructure and the people who depend on agriculture. For my area in Northern New York, this includes virtually all of us since our farms form the bulk of our economic backbone. Once we (or any

region of our nation) lose our tillable land and our skilled workforce, the likelihood of putting that land back into production in the future will be small. Those regions will need to find some other way to employ their residents. I think most folks want to keep this region in agriculture.

So, if your family includes a spouse, child, retired parent or an employee who has some time to work in an additional enterprise, this may be a good time to do so. Such an enterprise might be a pumpkin patch, sweet corn patch, cedar post production, freezer pork, lamb, chickens, rabbits, beef, veal, cut flowers, etc. Projects such as these can often use under-utilized or perhaps even wasted resources, such as an unused shed, garden area, field edge, or even human resources like a particular interest or talent and a small block of free time each week.

It is important that the secondary enterprises not take away valuable resources needed by your primary endeavors. For exam-

ple, it's a good idea to sketch out your labor peaks on a monthly or even a daily basis. Writing out the current blips or peak draws on your time input will help you avoid getting involved in those secondary enterprises that could reduce the efficiency of your primary enterprise.

Once you find some underused resources, (such as extra feed, bull calves, an empty shed, an employee with an hour of free time between daily duties, a spouse who can grow gladiolas, unused pasture, or a retired parent who loves bacon) you might put together a plan to take advantage of these resources and put them to good use. The diversity provided by these secondary enterprises can generate additional income, food for the table, a bonus for your hardworking employees, or even a barterable product that can help pay the bills or feed the family.

**Brent Buchanan is an Animal Science Specialist with Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County.**

## Resource Spotlight

### Farming Alternatives: A Guide to Evaluating the Feasibility of New Farm-Based Enterprises

This award-winning publication is designed to guide farm families or rural landowners through a step-by-step analysis of potential new farm-based enterprises. *Farming Alternatives* uses a case study and workbook format to help you evaluate your personal and family goals, available resources, alternative enterprise options, market potential, production feasibility, profitability, and cash flow.

Starting a new venture requires resources, careful management, hard work, and risk. Before committing your time and resources to an enterprise, it's important to look at the feasibility of the idea on paper. Each chapter of *Farming Alternatives* includes exercises — self-tests, checklists, and work sheets — that allow you to analyze an enterprise idea and build business management skills.

Worksheets help you take an inventory to identify underutilized resources; research potential markets to determine who will buy your product or service; and plan the production aspects of the enterprise. An income statement and cash flow analysis will help you estimate the profitability and financial feasibility of starting and operating the enterprise. The guidebook even explains how to combine the documents to present a proposal to a lender.

*Farming Alternatives* is available for just \$8.00 plus shipping and handling from Cornell's Community, Food, and Agriculture Program at 607-255-9832, [www.cfap.org](http://www.cfap.org), or from the Natural Resource, Agriculture and Engineering Service (NRAES) at 607-255-7654, [www.nraes.org](http://www.nraes.org).

## MARKETING

### Family Farm Cooperative Grocery Stores: Can We Adapt This European Model to the Northeast?

By Duncan Hilchey

Imagine walking into a grocery store in which everything for sale comes from local farms or small processors... a full meat case with beef, lamb, sausages, pork, poultry and other charcuterie; a dairy case with a multitude of fresh and aged cheeses as well as fresh milk, yogurt and butter; a bakery case with warm artisanal breads and scrumptious pastries; a wine cellar and cheese cave; bin after bin of fresh seasonal vegetables and herbs; and wall-shelves all around stocked floor to ceiling with every conceivable canned good you can imagine...

Sound crazy? Okay, let's go off the deep end... Imagine all of this being owned and managed by a committed group of family farmers.

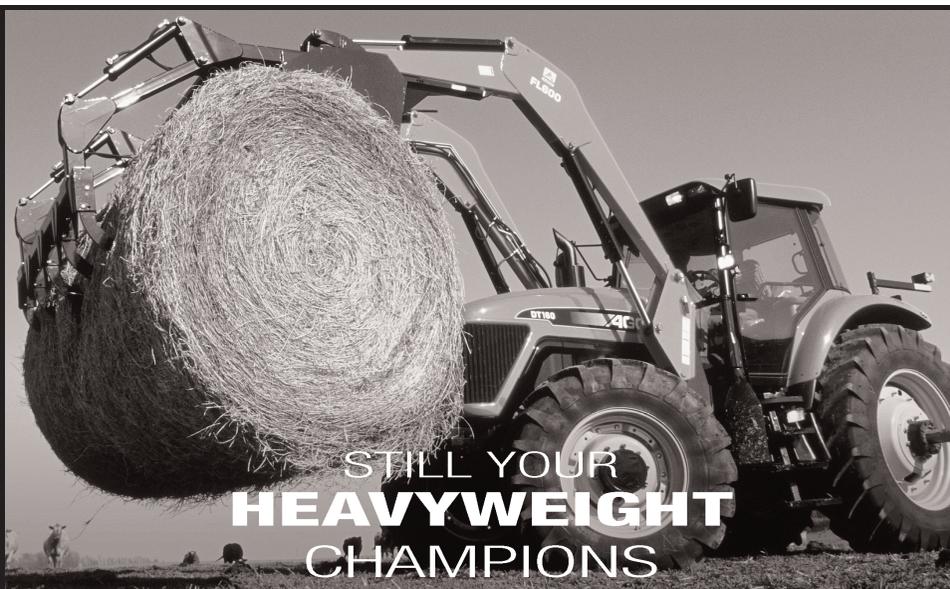
#### THE EUROPEAN MODEL

We don't have anything quite like this in the

United State-yet. Europeans, however, have been experimenting with such farmer-owned cooperative groceries for years, founded on centuries-old culinary traditions and foodways. The Rhone-Alps region of Southwest France alone has a network of 19 stores that are owned, supplied, and operated by farmers. Typically, 10 to 12 farm families own the store, each providing one or two specialties: meats, poultry, eggs, cheeses and other dairy products, wine, juices and canned goods, baked goods, fruits, and vegetables. The operation of a year-round grocery is of obvious benefit for farmers and consumers.

It is interesting to note, however, that cooperative farm groceries are not completely foreign to us in the U.S. In the 1940s and '50s the Grange League Federation (GLF) in New York operated "Producer and Consumer" cooperative stores, which later became the Syracuse, NY-based regional

(Cont. on next page)



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**STEWARDSHIP AND NATURE**

# Heading in the Right Direction: Local Delivery System is a Win-Win for Farmers, Customers, and Small Business

By Karen Baase

Recently two farmers shared some rather disturbing news with me. They speculated on the fragility of the world's food production system. One farmer theorized that with the volatility in prices paid to and received by farmers, commodity shortages and the uncertainties inherent in worldwide food security, weather, and energy - to name just a few - we may be seeing the looming signs of an international food crisis. The other farmer said that he heard this same ominous forecast and wondered if it were true.

If it is true, what are we to do? When put in terms of an international crisis, food scarcity and all of its worldwide ramifications are disastrous problems that are much too big for any nation - much less a person - to handle on their own.

Yet despite the enormity of this potential crisis, it is heartening to know that many people are doing their part in small, yet significant ways throughout the world to make today's food production and distribution system as sustainable as possible. Many of them live in Central New York.

Who are these folks? They are people who subscribe to what some call sustainable agriculture; food production systems that are "capable of maintaining their productivity and usefulness to society indefinitely." John Ikerd, a longtime advocate of sustainable agriculture and professor emeritus of agricultural economics at the University of Missouri, describes these kinds of systems as "resource-conserving, socially supportive, commercially competitive, and environmentally sound."

## Grocery Stores

(Cont. from previous page)

supermarket chain P&C. In the early days, the mission of these cooperative stores was to bring consumers and producers together in a mutually beneficial relationship. The stores, which eventually numbered in the twenties, even offered cold storage space for customers. However, the post-war demand for an ever-growing variety of products eventually led the stores to carry more than the limit of 51 percent of non-farmer-member's products on their shelves. At that point, in the 1950s, the cooperative store chain had to restructure as the private corporation we see today.

Despite the precedent, there are many questions about whether farmer-own cooperative retailing could re-emerge in the Northeast United States. The latest Census of Agriculture (2002) suggests that the total number of small farms is shrinking. In this case are there enough "agripreneurs" remaining with enough diversity to support a store in a given trade area? And even if an area has enough commercial producers, are these farmers willing to work cooperatively in a tightly woven organizational structure that may limit individual production and marketing decisions? And what about the perception of "elitist food"? The

Here in the Hamilton, NY, area we see that idea put into practice every week. Jim McDowell, owner of Small Street Co-op, pays a visit to some 25 customers who are subscribers to Green Rabbit Farm's CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) plus others, all who want locally grown farm products delivered to their door. But convenience is only a small selling point in this arrangement. More importantly, these customers know they are doing their part to support local farmers and local agriculture. At the same time, they know these products are a result of certain on-farm practices that are "resource-conserving, socially supportive, commercially competitive, and environmentally sound."

By teaming up with Aaron Lockart and Suzanne Slocum, owners of Green Rabbit Farm in Madison, and the owners of Carriage Barn Herbs in Norwich, Jim is able to sell Levain bread, fresh vegetables, herbs and hydroponically grown tomatoes. Farm products from Keith Morgan Davie, owner of Windhaven Farm in Saquoit and Dave and Sue Evans in Norwich help round out Jim's product list, which includes all kinds



Cleanliness is an everyday practice at Small Street Co-op.

of meats, eggs and a variety of milk, cheese and yogurt products.

Recently, Matthew Potteiger, associate professor of landscape architecture at the State University of New York School of Environmental Science & Forestry, has begun joining Jim on his weekly trek throughout Central New York. For the time being, this arrangement helps make Small Street more "sustainable" by spreading the workload between the two.

For the farmers who grow and supply these products, Small Street Co-op provides a service so the farmers have access to a potentially expanding customer base - cus-



Jim McDowell, owner of Small Street Co-op, pays a visit to one of the many customers who want locally grown farm products delivered to their door.



Matt Potteiger and Jim McDowell at Evans Creamery, Norwich

tomers they would not have time to approach personally. All for a very nominal delivery fee.

This is a "win-win" for everyone concerned - farmers, customers, and local agriculture. With all the agricultural potential in Madison County, this is one small but successful attempt to bridge the gap between customers and farmers and avert what could be Madison County's own food crisis.

**Karen Baase is Extension Issue Leader with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Madison County, NY.**



Product inventories give Small Street customers what they want when they need them.



Products from Evans Creamery, Norwich

real cost of family-farmed food could put a cooperative farm store out of reach for some folks.

### US GROCERY SUPPLY CHAINS-THE LOCAL REVOLUTION

Despite these challenges, the farm-owned cooperative grocery concept is definitely worth exploring. At the present time we are seeing a revolution in alternative marketing and supply chain development. Innovations such as CSAs, farmers' markets, public markets, buy local programs, the Slow Food movement, and most recently the "farm diner" concept have led to a more civically oriented sustainable agriculture movement. There are also a growing number of cooperative supply chain strategies being experimented with: the Oklahoma Food Cooperative and more recently the Arkansas Regional Food Network have begun to develop very sophisticated product marketing and distribution systems including multiple county product sourcing, sorting, pick-up and even home delivery.

However, one area of weakness has been the grocery sector. Once numbering in the thousands

in the US, retail consumer food cooperatives have consolidated to less than 300 storefronts. Likewise, Whole Foods, Inc., a Texas-based corporation, has already consolidated eleven independent alternative retailers and small regional chains. Such consolidation has come with sourcing practices that seem to exclude local growers and artisanal processors for a variety of reasons, including volume and price.

"Colorado Harmony Market" which recently opened in Fort Collins Colorado may be the closest thing we have in the US to the European cooperative farm store. Farmers buy memberships in the store and get preferential product placement. This marketing innovation is a result of a partnership between the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, Colorado State University, and American Farmland Trust, as well as other individuals and organizations that have an interest in supporting regional food production.

#### LET'S TRY IT HERE!

Cornell's Community, Food, and Agriculture

Program has teamed up with the Sustainability Institute of Hartland Vermont to submit a proposal to the Northeast SARE Program to study the potential of cooperative grocery stores here in the Northeast. If funded, we will organize a regional learning community of retail enterprise teams (comprised of farmer groups and their advisors) to explore the European cooperative farm-owned grocery store model and experiment with a North American version of the concept. Representatives of the learning community would visit France, and a French consultant would come to the U.S. to assist in the business planning, capitalization and opening of at least one cooperative-owned farm grocery.

If you are interested in this project or in the concept of cooperative retailing in general, please contact Duncan Hilchey at 607-255-4413, dlh3@cornell.edu.

**Duncan Hilchey is a Senior Extension Associate with the Community, Food, and Agriculture program at Cornell University.**

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**GRAZING****Getting Started in Pasture-Farming: Use What You Have**

By Jack Salo

Earlier today I was out using a lawn tractor, not to mow the lawn, but to clip a paddock that my Polled Dorset Sheep had spent several days grazing. Several weeks ago I finished removing the winter's bedding from my barn, not with a skid steer, but with a fork and a small pick-up truck. The winter's hay is being hauled with same truck and occasionally a utility trailer that I borrow. With the cap on the truck I have taken up to six lambs to the slaughterhouse saving on having someone else haul them for me. The truck and the lawn tractor are the extent of my farm "equipment" and have worked quite well for the small sheep operation I began several years ago.

You may think I'm working too hard, or that I'm a bit crazy for doing things this way. You may be right, but it is and was the best and least expensive way for me to get into small-scale farming. While I am finally approaching the point where additional equipment would save some time and work, there are many reasons to use what is available, rent or borrow what you only occasionally need and to carefully weigh the costs and benefits of any new equipment, especially for a small livestock operation where you are unlikely to justify the cost.

There are some things that I would not want to do without in a small start-up livestock operation, although expensive equipment still isn't on the list. As someone new to farming, I benefited immeasurably during the first year from the experience, wisdom and generosity of my shepherding mentor, Nancy Morey. Our first lambing season was tough and we lost 3 lambs and a ewe. Nancy was there to help whenever it was needed. If you can find someone to answer your questions and to assist you for the first few times with lambing, shots, trimming feet, diagnosing routine health issues, etc. you will gain skill and confidence much faster than muddling through on your own.

I would also not do without good fencing, both perimeter fences and the Electronet fencing used to contain the flock in paddocks as they move through the rotational grazing system. I use small, compact solar fence chargers that can be moved easily with the interior fencing. Again, none of these items are expensive, and they have a quick return on investment. It is also important to have the basic tools, medication and supplies necessary to keep your sheep healthy. There is an initial investment of several hundred dollars to acquire the hand tools, medication, syringes, etc. that you will need to care for your animals.



The author minimized his investment in new equipment by using what was available - like this lawn tractor.

I currently have 18 ewes and ewe lambs, a ram and five ram lambs that will be sold this fall. In addition to the pleasure I have realized learning about sheep and caring for them, I have also come to realize that you can operate a small livestock operation without a major investment in equipment. All of the equipment I currently use I owned prior to starting out with sheep. I have added the necessary hand tools, supplies,

fencing, waterers and feeders over the three years I have raised sheep. While my operation may require some extra physical work, I don't have the expense or headaches associated with maintaining an inventory of equipment. Additionally, I am more inclined to look for ways to operate more efficiently and save labor since I don't have the equipment to fall back on.

**Jack Salo farms in Greene, NY.**

**Resource Spotlight****Vermont Pasture Network**

The Center for Sustainable Agriculture at the University of Vermont, Vermont Grass Farmers Association and Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont have received funding for the Vermont Pasture Network, a collaborative effort aimed at expanding the practice of "Management Intensive Grazing" (MIG) on Vermont farms.

Management Intensive Grazing — also known as "grass farming," "rotational pasture management," or "prescribed grazing" — is an environmentally and economically viable system of forage-based animal production. MIG is a sustainable farming practice that allows livestock farmers to minimize production costs while protecting

water quality, soil fertility, animal health, and the quality of life of the farm family.

Vermont's landscape and topography are well suited to pasture production. MIG uses permanent pastures for the primary feed of livestock. Instead of a system of annual plowing, re-planting and barn feeding of forage crops, livestock on MIG farms are rotated from pasture to pasture and self-harvest most of their own feed. The farmer closely monitors the health of both the animals and the pasture plants to ensure that optimal feed conditions are met. Due to the decreased need for mechanical harvesting and manure handling, grass farmers are able to reduce their equipment and fuel costs.

Emerging information about the high nutritional content of grass-fed meat and milk products is raising consumer awareness about the benefits of grass farming.

This three-year project received funding through the Clean Water Act from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Department of Environmental Conservation. It provides additional comprehensive technical assistance to meet the needs of dairy farmers converting to management intensive grazing as a way to reduce non-point source phosphorus pollution.

The project will also help producers develop pasture management plans for farms that are transitioning to more intense grazing practices and/or transitioning to organic dairy farms. UVM's Center for Sustainable Agriculture will be responsible for overall management and evaluation of the project.

The Vermont Pasture Network's activities include: networking and learning opportunities for farmers and agency personnel; seven community-based farmer discussion groups; pasture walks and on-farm workshops; annual grazing conference; technical assistance for dairy farmers converting to MIG; assistance with writing grazing plans for individual farms; a monthly calendar of pasture-related events; and an internet discussion list.

**Information on the Vermont Pasture Network including a schedule of Pasture Walks and related events is available on the web site of the Vermont Center for Sustainable Agriculture, [www.uvm.edu/sustainableagriculture](http://www.uvm.edu/sustainableagriculture). For additional information, please feel free to contact Gwyneth Harris, the Center's Pasture Network Facilitator, at 802-656-3834.**

**COMMUNITY/WORLD****Beyond Shopping: Helping Consumers Become Good "Food Citizens"**

By Les Hulcoop

At a Statewide meeting of Agricultural Extension Educators at Cornell, I was introduced to a new and interesting term, "Food Citizenship." The term was used in a report submitted to the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell, called "The Future of American Agriculture and the Land Grant University: Towards a Sustainable, Healthful, and Entrepreneurial Food System." A big title for an important concept.

The report had many recommendations with a wide range of implications for the Land Grant Universities. Let me share a few excerpts from the report specifically targeted to food citizenship.

- The idea of food citizenship captures a shift in which consumers move beyond

shopping to a broader engagement with the food system in its many dimensions.

- Food citizenship should lead to improved knowledge about food systems, and the food we eat needs to play a more prominent role in the college's educational program.
- Cornell, as an institutional leader in both life sciences and socio-economic development, is uniquely positioned to contribute to the complex process and anticipate the evolution of a consumer driven food system.
- Through research, education and extension, Cornell and other land grant universities should provide public and private decision-makers with the information and tools they need to support an engaged food citizenry, a sound public food policy, and a

vibrant food landscape. The last paragraph of the report says, "Because food is central to our well being and because personal and public decisions about food can have a profound and far reaching consequences, our strongest recommendation is that the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences should play a much stronger campus and national role in food citizenship education." (The full report can be viewed online at [www.cals.cornell.edu/polson/faawhitepaper.pdf](http://www.cals.cornell.edu/polson/faawhitepaper.pdf) or contact Joanna Green at 607-255-9227 for a print copy.)

What does this all mean? Here in the Hudson Valley, a local food citizenship program would open a dialogue about local food and nutrition. This discussion would point to the importance of local farmers, locally grown foods, and other important Hudson Valley food system issues. And it would highlight the importance of protecting and promoting

the Hudson Valley agriculture industry. These "Food Citizens" would become ambassadors for local food and agriculture. They would increase the community's awareness of the Hudson Valley system. Educating a diverse group of people would strengthen the local agriculture industry, the local food distribution network and a healthy nutritious local diet.

**Les Hulcoop is Agricultural Issues Leader with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Dutchess County. He plans to begin developing a Food Citizenship program year. To find out more, contact Les at 845-677-8223 or [lh7@cornell.edu](mailto:lh7@cornell.edu).**



**NEW FARMERS**

# Getting Access to Land for Farming

By Kathy Ruhf

*This article is in remembrance of Chuck Matthei, a visionary and pioneer in the area of equitable access to land. Chuck was the founder of Equity Trust (CT), an organization devoted to alternative and affordable tenure for farmers and other seekers of land and housing. Chuck passed away in October, 2002.*

***“I want to start farming. How can I find a farm?”***

***“I just bought some farmland. How do I start farming it?”***

***“I can’t afford to purchase a farm. How can I get onto farmland?”***

Are any of these questions familiar to you? If so, you are asking some of the most important and challenging questions facing new farmers today: how to find, evaluate and get onto the right piece of farmland. Especially in some parts of the Northeast, where competition for and cost of land is high, accessing farmland may be the toughest obstacle for a beginning farmer.

The “farmland question” includes: 1) locating land, 2) assessing it for suitability for your farming goals, 3) choosing the right tenure model, 4) negotiating the transfer, and 5) securing any necessary financing.

Tenure means “to hold.” There are different ways to “hold” land. How a new farmer feels about relating to farmland will guide his or her decisions about tenure options. Many farmers have a deep, value-based commitment to owning a farm. They view farmland as a legacy. For them, stewardship and ownership are inextricably linked.

Others feel that stewardship values can be realized on land they don’t own. For many new farmers, owning the land is not as important as long-term security. Some are guided by personal values that question private ownership of land as a commodity. They welcome tenure arrangements that address issues such as speculative gain.

Others feel that it’s better not to invest capital into land, but rather into growing the business. They realize that for their enterprise, they cannot carry the costs of owning the land. As several economists have pointed out, farmers cannot always pay for farmland by farming it.

Still other farmers hope eventually to own their own farms but value the option for shorter-term tenure agreements as a first step. So choice of tenure type is both a very personal as well as business decision.

**TENURE OPTIONS**

What are the elements of tenure? You need access to the land. You need security. You need to be able to redeem your investment in the property. You need clear articulation of rights and responsibilities. Some people argue that settling these factors is more important than who holds title.

Often tenure decisions change over the course of a new farmer’s development. In the start-up phase, it may make sense to begin farming with a short-term rental arrangement. Short-term rental—one to five years—offers the advantage of flexibility and lower land costs. If you decide to change your enterprise or your location, it’s easier to move on. On the other hand, short-term rental can discourage investment in improvements that have a longer-term

return such as some soil amendments, fencing, or an equipment shed.

For some farmers, a longer-term lease agreement offers real advantages and can be an excellent choice for the farmland owner as well. Long-term leases—five to thirty years or more—offer the opportunity for security and therefore a longer planning horizon. This fosters stewardship practices such as rotations or slower-release soil amendments, ownership of improvements, and mortgageability.

A variation on leasing is lease-to-own, where a young farmer starts out leasing, but the tenure arrangement provides an agreement or an option to purchase the property after a certain amount of time. For example, Nan has negotiated a 10-year lease with a private landowner. She has the right to use the land, well-water, and a small barn for her farm business in exchange for an annual fee. They have divided the responsibilities for repairs, property taxes, and other land costs. Nan is permitted to build a farmstand on the property. The landowner agreed to purchase the residual value of the building if and when Nan leaves the property. She has first option to renew the lease, and also to purchase the property if the landowner decides to sell. Of course, there are many details included in this type of agreement, but the bottom line is that both parties are satisfied.

**TRANSFERRING FARM OWNERSHIP**

When farm ownership is transferred, the process is complex, too. There are interpersonal, legal, and financial considerations. Today, fewer farm properties are being transferred within the farm family. Intra-family succession to the next generation in the farm family can be extremely complicated.

Often, there are delicate issues around the estate planning and retirement needs of the exiting generation as well as the treatment of non-farming heirs. One of the trickiest issues is the transfer of decision-making between the generations. One famous story involves the exiting farmer not being “ready” to pass along management to his son. The farmer was 96 years old; the son was 72.

Sometimes, there is no heir to take over the family farm business. If the family is committed to seeing the farm business continue and the farmland stay in farming, they need to locate a farmer outside the family. In transfers between unrelated parties, the issues are no less complicated. The transfer must consider the family, legal, and financial implications of transfer of the farm business assets and management.

For some new farmers, entering into a transitional arrangement with an exiting farmer offers considerable advantages. First, there is the opportunity for mentoring. Working alongside an experienced farmer who is a willing teacher is a true gift. Gradual transfers of the farm business can also make business sense to both parties. The new farmer can start as an employee, with specified tasks. She or he can save money while working into an equity position as a partner, for example.

The exiting farmer can sell or gift farm business assets while transferring management responsibility. This arrangement enables the eventual transfer of ownership of the farm while sparing the sudden and often

unmanageable impact of capital gains or estate taxes for the exiting farmer or his heirs. It also enables the new farmer to build equity and experience.

Sometimes, a new farmer can find secure tenure on land that is not currently being farmed or that is owned by non-farming landowners such as private families, municipalities, or land trusts. Often, these opportunities provide wonderful win-win situations for both parties. Landowners can meet their goals to have the land in active use, and farmers can negotiate secure tenure through a variety of arrangements. More and more non-farming landowners are interested in organic, and are looking for farmers to meet their stewardship interests such as wildlife habitat enhancement or water supply protection.

For example, Joe negotiated a long-term lease for farm property owned by a local land trust. The terms of the lease required that the land be farmed according to organic certification standards. The land trust arranged and paid for technical assistance to help Joe develop his business plan.

**FINDING LAND**

How can you find land? Unless you are a next-generation farmer poised to take on the family farm, you need to find the land that meets your personal and farm business needs. Thinking through some of these complicated issues is an important first step. Then what? There are programs and strategies to help you find the right farm.

Over ten years ago, the Center for Rural Affairs in Nebraska recognized that more and more retiring farmers did not have heirs to take over the farm. At the same time, there were more and more young farmers from non-farm backgrounds who wanted to find farmland as well as young people who were not interested in or able to take over the family farm but who wanted to stay in farming. The Center founded the first “land-linking” program. Its purpose was to match farm seekers with farm owners and to facilitate the farm transfer.

Since then, land-linking programs have sprung up across the country. Today, the Northeast boasts more linking programs than any other region. New England Land Link, a program of the New England Small Farm Institute, was first in the region, and covered the six New England states. Since that time, state-specific programs emerged in Vermont (Land Link Vermont) and Maine (Maine Land Link). Programs in New York (NY FarmLink) and Pennsylvania (PA Farm Link) were established in the early 1990s. Newer programs have been launched in Maryland and New Jersey.

All land-link programs have in common the linking component. However, soon after these programs were established, their sponsors realized that just connecting land owners and land seekers was not enough to assure a successful farm transfer. A lot of technical assistance, “hand-holding,” education, information, and referral were required beyond the simple exchange of contact information about available properties.

These days, linking programs provide a wide array of programs and services, from estate and retirement planning workshops to publications on alternative tenure, individual farm succession consultations, expert facilitation and mediation, and trainings for professional service providers.

Training service providers is really important. There are very few estate planners, attorneys, accountants, extension educators, or farm consultants with expertise in farm succession and acquisition. Even these advisors are not necessarily familiar with some of the more innovative approaches that are increasingly popular with farmland owners and seekers alike, such as the use of conservation easements,

Another challenge is finding and educating farmland owners. In linking programs, the ratio of land seekers to owners can be as high as 7:1. It’s been shown that farm owners, especially those in the generation ready to retire, are reluctant to think about succession planning. Many do not have wills. Most do not have a succession plan, and fewer still have identified a successor. Too often, adequate planning does not happen, and heirs are forced to sell the farm—often for development—to pay estate taxes. Helping new farmers get onto farms often means helping exiting farmers prepare to pass the land along to a new farmer.

In the Northeast, there are many non-traditional partners that can play an important role in getting new farmers onto farmland. These partners participate in creating tenure packages that can make secure and affordable tenure a real option for new farmers.

For example, some land trusts are very interested in working landscapes and are active in obtaining easements—meaning a restriction prohibiting the land from being developed on agricultural land. They want farmland to be protected and sometimes have specific stewardship goals. The Vermont Land Trust is a leader in this area. A few land trusts own land and offer secure lease agreements. More often, they own an easement. The easement makes the land more affordable because it removes the development value. The land trust can be an important partner in negotiating tenure terms that allow sustainable or organic farming practices.

Publicly held open space-properties acquired or protected by municipalities or states—can sometimes be used by new farmers. The new farmer will never own the land, but innovative long-term agreements can benefit both parties.

Shareholders in community supported agriculture (CSA) farms can be among the most powerful partners in a farmer’s search for secure tenure. In some cases, shareholders raise money to buy the land or contribute to a fund that enables the farmer to purchase the land. Other community interests such as recreational clubs or schools may be willing to invest in preserving a piece of property for farming if they also derive direct benefit from the arrangement. They may contribute in exchange for the right to use riding or snow mobile trails. Equity Trust, an organization in Voluntown, CT, is a pioneer and leader in promoting and packaging these types of arrangements.

**TIPS FOR FARM-HUNTERS**

How do new farmers find farms? Besides checking in with land-linking organizations, you can work with a realtor. However, many realtors are not very interested in farm properties. Linking programs suggest checking with farm publications and state department of agriculture and extension newsletters, all of which have classified sections where farms are listed. You can also look on bulletin boards of farm suppliers and dealers, attend farm organization

(Cont. on next page)

(Cont. from previous page)

meetings and conferences, and just ask around.

Sometimes a new farmer will ask, "There's a farm in my town with an elderly farmer (or non-farming widow). Can I just go knock on the door?" Our answer is, if you do your homework and are very thoughtful and diplomatic in your approach, it might work!

The most common complaint from farm owners who are approached by a would-be-farmer is that the person is "starry-eyed" and doesn't have her ducks lined up. Why would they entrust their beloved farm and farm business to someone who doesn't have a clue? So, it's important to be knowledgeable, professional, and prepared. And be realistic about your level of experience. You may be better off to learn about farm management as a farm employee or assistant manager before you take on your own farm business.

**WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A FARM PROPERTY?**

There are so many considerations in looking for land that it can feel daunting. Sometimes it helps to divide the variables into three categories: necessary, desirable, and optional.

You may need to live in a particular area. You or your partner may have a job in the area or the schools may be particularly desirable, for example. You may need high quality soils for specialty crops or a visible location for a retail outlet, if these business choices are firm. It might be desirable, but not absolutely necessary, to find a property with a barn in good condition, a working well, and a house on the property, but under the right circumstances, you can build barns, dig wells, or live nearby.

Consider neighbors, visibility, and the general community environment. Is it friendly to farming? Are there other farms in the area? Does it matter to you? Where are the nearest suppliers and repair services? How far to the markets you choose to

pursue? If you want customers to come to the farm, consider ease of access.

You can get a good sense of a farm property by eye-balling it, but that's not enough. Consult a soils map and ask for or obtain soil tests. Consider the ways in which microclimates, wetlands and other sensitive features may contribute to the overall health of the farm or constrain it.

What is the lay-out of the farm and any structures? Is it workable or adaptable to your business interests? Where are the boundaries? What size and shape are the fields? In what condition are the buildings, fencing, culverts, and woodlands?

What about housing? Some land-link seekers fantasize about their ideal house in their farm search: "Three bedrooms, southern exposure, energy-efficient, hardwood floors." Others are satisfied with the prospect of living in a mobile home, above the barn, or down the street in rented rooms.

It is very important to inquire about the history of the farm. What were the past uses? Where are any underground storage tanks? Where were chemicals stored and used? Were there any non-farm uses of the property? Are there any liens or other encumbrances? Of course, the questions you ask will depend somewhat on the tenure model you select. If you plan to rent some acreage, many of these questions are not as critical as if you are planning to purchase a functioning farm with farmstead.

**YOU CAN FIND LAND TO FARM!**

For help finding land, contact one or more of the land-linking programs listed here. You can also check out the Growing New Farmers online resource directory at [www.northeastnewfarmer.org](http://www.northeastnewfarmer.org), and the National Farm Transition Network at [www.extension.iastate.edu/nftn](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/nftn).

**Kathy Ruhf is Director of the New England Small Farm Institute and of the Growing New Farmers project.**

*Resource Spotlight*

**Land Linking Programs: Matching Land Owners and Land Seekers**

Several programs in the Northeast work to connect farmers with land. They specialize in making connections between landowners—often retiring farmers—who are looking to sell, lease, or rent their land, and farmers—often beginning farmers—who are looking for access to farmland. Many of these organizations also provide other services to beginning farmers, including assistance in obtaining credit, writing a business plan, and technical assistance regarding purchasing, leasing, and renting farmland.

**Maine Farmlink**  
(207) 382-3255  
[www.state.me.us/agriculture/mpd/farmlink](http://www.state.me.us/agriculture/mpd/farmlink)  
P.O. Box 1597  
Bucksport, ME 04416

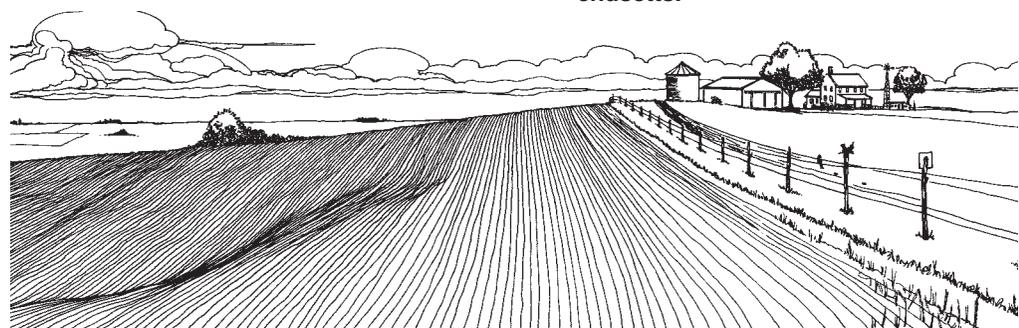
**New England Land Link**  
(413) 323-4531  
[www.smallfarm.org](http://www.smallfarm.org)  
PO Box 937  
Belchertown, MA 01007

**New Jersey Farm Link**  
(609) 984-2504  
[www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/farmlink.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/farmlink.htm)  
New Jersey Department of Agriculture  
PO Box 330  
Trenton, NJ 08625

**New York Farm Link**  
(800)-547-3276  
[www.nyfarmlink.org](http://www.nyfarmlink.org)  
415 Warren Hall  
Ithaca, NY 14853-7801

**Pennsylvania Farm Link**  
(717) 664-7077  
[www.pafarmlink.org](http://www.pafarmlink.org)  
2708A N. Colebrook Rd  
Manheim, PA 17545

**Compiled by Eric Toensmeier, Program Specialist with the New England Small Farm Institute in Belchertown, Massachusetts.**



*Resource Spotlight*

**Holding Ground—A Guide to Northeast Farmland Tenure and Stewardship**

*Holding Ground: A Guide to Northeast Farmland Tenure and Stewardship* is a comprehensive resource for information on farmland access, transfer, affordability, and stewardship.

Secure land tenure is a critical issue in the Northeast as farmers confront the considerable barriers to finding — and affording — farmland. Many exiting farm families and other farmland owners are looking for legal tools and models to ensure that their land will be well cared for when farmed by others.

*Holding Ground* examines leases and other tenure arrangements that address the complex needs and circumstances surrounding farmland access and transfer, both in the Northeast as well as across the US. It shows how secure and equitable land tenure can be achieved through arrangements that provide access and affordability but stop short of outright ownership.

*Holding Ground* opens doors to new tenure models and partnerships by providing practical information to farmers, conservation organizations, and agriculture service

providers. Readers are guided to craft innovative tenure agreements that have been proven to meet the objectives of both farmers and the landowners.

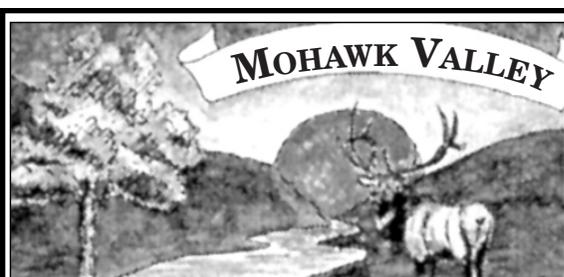
*Holding Ground* contains sample lease provisions with explanations, sample stewardship standards, worksheets, and case studies. Contents include:

- Principles and challenges of farmland tenure
- Short-term leases
- Long-term leases and other non-traditional tenure models
- Paths to ownership
- Farmland stewardship
- Negotiating, monitoring, and enforcing agreements

*Holding Ground* is a publication of the New England Small Farm Institute (NESFI) in Massachusetts and the Intervale Foundation in Vermont. The eighteen authors include farmers, landowners, attorneys, and land use specialists.

You can purchase this 162-page publication for \$20.00 plus \$2.00 shipping and handling. Bulk discounts are available. Order on-line at the NESFI Bookstore at [www.smallfarm.org/bookstore](http://www.smallfarm.org/bookstore) or by calling Intervale Foundation at 802-660-0440 or NESFI at 413-323-4531.

**Submitted by Kathy Ruhf, Director of the New England Small Farm Institute.**



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AGENCY

## COMMUNITY/WORLD

## Cooper's Ark Farm: Combining Fun and Education

By Terry Lavigne

There's a lot more to do at Cooper's Ark Farm than take a fifteen minute hay ride. The farm is open to the public seven days a week, nine-to-five, from Memorial Day to Columbus Day weekend, no appointment necessary. A thumbnail sketch of Phil and Pam Metzger's operation is given on their promotional flyer:

"Cooper's Ark Farm is 15+ acres hidden in the beautiful Schoharie Valley, along the Schoharie Creek. We are a New York State agritourism destination providing family fun and an educational opportunity. Take a free hay wagon ride to our new barn. There you'll see several animals waiting to become your friend. You can buy whole corn on the cob, remove the kernels the way they did it in the early 1900's, grind it in an 1800's grinder and offer it to the animals. We have several other "old time" implements and tools on display."

From backyard hobby to business venture Cooper's Ark Farm does sell eggs, meat birds, kid goats, and other agricultural products, but they are far from a conventional farm. And Phil and Pam are not your typical farmers who grew up in dairy, or beef, or field crops operations. Like many suburbanites, they just wanted to have a place in the country, and maybe raise a few animals.

But in the five years since they've been on their little farm next to Schoharie Creek, a "few" animals has grown into 700+ laying chickens, 100 roasters, numerous ducks and guinea fowl, peacocks, fifty or sixty goats, three large swine, a sow and her piglets, a trio of Lion's Mane rabbits, some hair sheep, and several ponies, horses and donkeys. The farm has gone from a pleasant place to relax and enjoy the peace of rural life to a full time business.

I figured one of the Metzgers must have some experience in agriculture. But Phil insists they knew nothing about farming. Twenty-four days after moving in, the farm sported 1000 feet of fencing, a small barn and ten assorted goats purchased from Bob Thomas, well-known Schoharie Veterinarian and goat person.

"We were all loaded up with the goats," says Phil, "and I was pulling out of Bob's driveway when it came to me to ask him "What do you feed them?"

We all know that's not the way to go about getting into farming. But Pam and Phil still have these goats (bred to kid off-season to provide kids when there are few available) as well as a whole flock who live at the new barn, which I've taken to calling 'the learning center'.

## DEDICATED TO EDUCATING

It is obvious that the Metzgers have worked very hard and learned a lot in their five years on the farm. Because of this learning experience they have made educating the public about agriculture, especially children, a major part of their business. "People have no idea of how much work is involved in producing the dozen eggs they purchase from us, so we give them the opportunity to experience it first hand by helping to harvest, wash and package the eggs they buy."

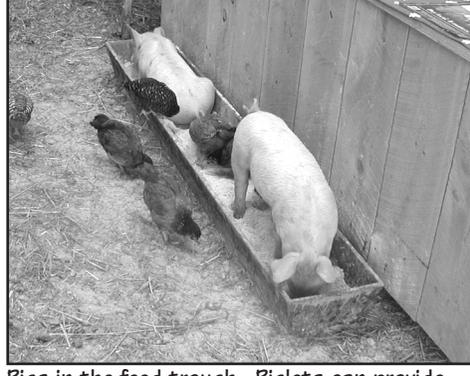
Make no mistake. Phil and Pam didn't just snap their fingers and produce a business that covers all their expenses and provides a decent lifestyle. They have the advan-



Handicapped accessible chicken shed where folks in wheelchairs can interact with the layers and harvest eggs.



Phil and Pam in the "Learning Center."



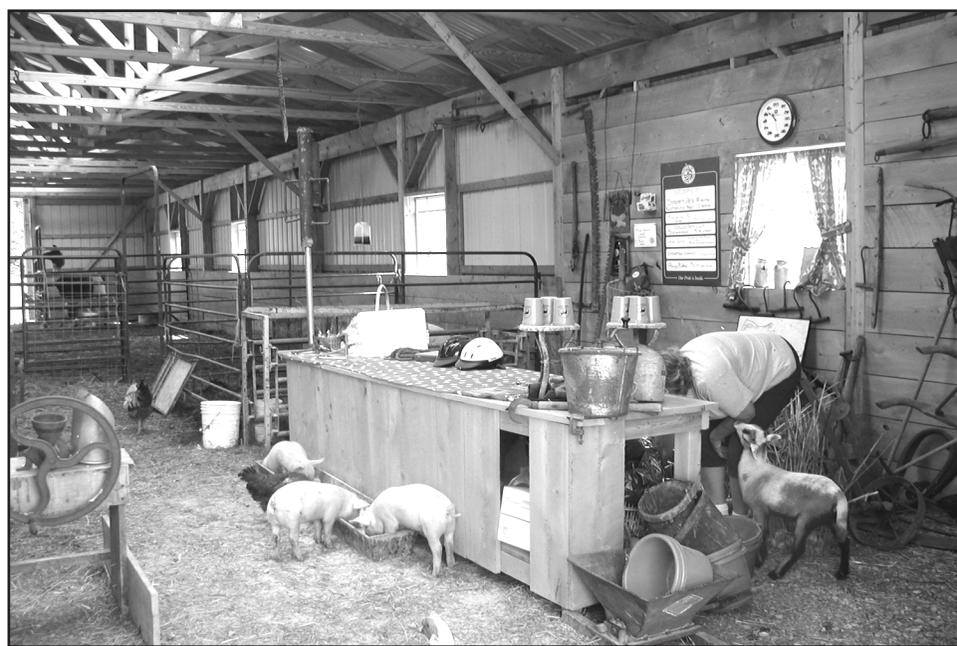
Pigs in the feed trough. Piglets can provide children and adults hours of amusement.

tage of off-farm income that allows them to weather the down times. In our present economic situation, nearly all our new farm start-ups are by people who have off-farm income to support the farm until such time as the farm can support itself.

Phil and Pam will continue to have the off-farm income; so they run the farm more out of love and enjoyment and the desire to provide people with a little bit of the sense of wonder and peace they have found. The farm has become a larger thing than a business — it has become an obligation to make the bit of earth they are stewarding richer, healthier and more vital.

Enough philosophy. Just what is Cooper's Ark Farm? "Before the 1960's this whole area was a large dairy farm," explains Phil. "The owners were looking for something more lucrative. Even back then farming was not a big net profit business, so they turned the farm into a golf course called Cooper's Village".

As we have all learned from hard experience and the numerous agriculture publications we have read, an idea is only as good as its execution and management. "In hindsight, rural Schoharie was probably not the best place to locate a golf course back in the 1960s." The golf course failed and the land was subdivided and sold for building lots. The farm is located near the end of a dirt road and borders the creek. Most of the fifteen acres is bottom land and provides excellent pasture for the wide variety of animals, hence the "Ark" in Cooper's Ark Farm. As I noted, the farm produces free range



The Learning Center, with corn grinder on left, pigs and chickens and Sundance, the lamb that thinks he's a person, to the left with Pam.



The goat yard, where you can get up close and personal with the goats.

eggs, all-natural roasting chickens, chicks, ducks, kid goats, and some pork, though the big pigs may not have a return engagement next year. Pam said, "Almost all the animals here have names. We love them like family and would never think of eating them. But the pigs don't have any names, and I won't miss them." They were scheduled to go to processing the week I visited. All the pork from the animals was already sold, so there is no uncertainty about what to do with them after slaughter.

Pam's statement gave a hint as to the real business of the farm. If animals have names and don't have a destination on somebody's dinner plate, then how do they earn their keep? Phil and Pam are attempting to fill the agritourism niche. They offer farm tours that are really an agricultural learning experience with an emphasis on serving the handicapped.

## MAKING FARM FUN ACCESSIBLE

The Metzgers received a 2004 Agritourism Grant from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and Senator Nancy Lorraine Hoffman's office in the amount of \$14,300.00. This grant enabled the Metzger's to install a gravel roadway on which to operate the tractor and hay wagon for the tours. Like most farms, they had only dirt laneways that became muddy and rutted whenever it rained.

The remainder of the grant is being used to construct a handicapped-accessible hay wagon so those in wheelchairs can go on

the tours. The tractor and hay wagon provide that hayride experience that most of us remember with such fondness from our childhoods. Phil and Pam believe it is important to provide this experience to those of us who are not physically able to climb up on a hay wagon.

Gearing the farm toward serving the handicapped isn't strictly a business decision for Phil. He hurt himself badly in a construction accident twelve years ago. When they bought their place in the country, Phil could not raise his arms above his head and had no strength in his hands. Five years of constant toil to care for the farm and the animals have given him back much of his strength and mobility. Phil understands what benefits an afternoon at the farm can provide for a handicapped person.

Phil and Pam stress that the farm, like any living thing, is constantly evolving. One thing that changed this year was the price structure. They used to offer family tours for \$30/family. This did not work well because people would show up without reserving time.

Now they've modeled the pricing structure on the North Pole Park in upstate New York. Admission is now \$4.00 per person. Additional activities above and beyond the hayride have their own reasonable fee, for example, a pony ride through the woods is \$2.00. You can "pick your own" eggs for \$2.50 a dozen. You can shell and grind six

(Cont. on next page)

**PRODUCTION AND MANAGEMENT****Tax Tips for 2004**

By Mariane Kiraly

This article will help you manage higher farm income in 2004. If you paid some tax in 2003, you will be paying more tax in 2004.

The key to minimizing taxable income is to know, in general, what your tax liability will be for 2004. You lose most of your options after the first of the year except for IRA's and some SEP plans. The best way to get an idea is to meet with your tax practitioner in the last quarter of the year with your income and expenses totals in hand. That way, there will be no surprises when tax time comes!

Let's investigate a few ways to manage income to your benefit.

**Labor Hired.** According to Farmer's Tax Guide 2003: "You can deduct reasonable wages paid for farm labor, contract labor and other forms of labor hired to perform work on your farm." Also, if you transfer property to an employee in payment for services, you can deduct as wages the fair market value of the property. You will still have to report a gain or loss the same as if you had sold the property, if applicable.

For instance, say you transfer a beef animal to an employee as a "bonus". You should then find out what the market value of that animal was from a local auction or slaughter house and deduct that amount from your tax return. Make sure to report the capital gain as if you sold it directly to an auction house.

**Child as an employee.** You can deduct reasonable wages or other compensation you pay to your child for doing farm work if a true employer-employee relationship exists between you and your child. Include wages paid as a deduction. If the child is 18 or older, wages are subject to social security and Medicare taxes. If the child is 17 or younger, these taxes are not withheld. A dependent has to file a tax return if he or she had earned income, such as salary or wages that totaled more than \$4,750.

**Hire your spouse!** It's sometimes a good idea to hire your spouse and pay his or her health insurance and other benefits. This makes especially good sense for young farmers whose spouses work on the farm.

(Cont. from previous page)

ears of corn and feed it to the animals for \$2.00.

"One of the best rewards is turning a kid around who is afraid." Phil told me. "Kids will go from being terrified of the pony to

It is also a way to build up Social Security benefits while providing disability coverage and survivors' benefits.

**Buy health insurance.** Health insurance premiums are 100% deductible for self-employed taxpayers. If you currently do not have healthcare coverage, this is a way to protect farm assets in the event of illness or injury.

**Make regular, monthly contributions to an IRA and/or SEP.** Since dairy farmers are self-employed, they are solely responsible for their own retirement fund planning. Many farmers have relied on Social Security and/or the sale of the farm to provide for their retirement. However, as it takes more and more money to fund retirements it makes sense to contribute to retirement plans.

IRA's include both Traditional and Roth IRA's that carry a maximum of \$3000 contribution for 2004. Catch-up contributions of \$500 for individuals 50 and over can increase the contribution to \$3500. The advantage of Traditional IRAs is that they are deductible and can reduce the taxable income of self-employed people. Taxes are paid when the holder makes withdrawals in retirement.

Spouses that work on the farm may also take out an IRA. Spouses that work off the farm and file a joint return with a farmer-spouse can be limited in their IRA contribution. For married filing jointly, the phase-out range for deductible IRA's has increased to \$60,000 - \$70,000 of adjusted gross income. Consult your tax practitioner for your individual situation.

Roth IRA's are non-deductible and work well for people who are not within the income limits. Distributions of Roth IRA's are not taxable because the tax was already paid on the income during the year that contributions were made. The \$3000 limit is also in effect on Roth IRA's with the additional \$500 catch-up for those over 50 years old.

Another form of retirement plan for self-employed people is the SEP (Simplified Employee Pension). This is a written plan that allows you to make deductible contributions toward your own and your employees' retirement without getting involved in

not wanting to let go. It's great to be able to have that kind of an impact on a kid."

Phil stresses the importance of bringing a camera, as there are tons of opportunities to take pictures. Although no appointment is necessary, you can call ahead to arrange to bottle feed the baby sheep and goats.

more complex retirement plans. Contributions for 2004 are limited to 25% of compensation or \$40,000, whichever is less. When figuring the deduction for employer contributions made to your own SEP-IRA, compensation is your net earnings from self-employment that takes into account both the following:

The deduction for 1/2 of your self-employment  
The deduction for contributions to your own SEP-IRA 50% of the SEP start-up costs can also be deducted and earnings are not taxed until retirement.

Another credit available to taxpayers who contribute to a qualified retirement plan is the Retirement Savings Contributions Credit on line 48 of the 1040. So, not only can a person reduce taxable income but can also receive an additional tax credit as an additional benefit!

**Farm Income Averaging (Schedule J).** Before you go out and spend tons of money on items to reduce net farm income, sit down with your tax practitioner and consider what Income Averaging can do for you. This option is available for individuals, a partner in a partnership, a shareholder in an S corp. The idea with income averaging is to take excess income in a high-income year, divide it by 3 and add it to income over the last three years. This year could be the perfect time for you to consider this tool. Schedule J is not complicated and a good tax practitioner will be able to tell you how income averaging could benefit you.

After you have put money away into IRA's and other retirement funds, and after you have paid your children and spouse, and after you have looked at the advantages of income averaging, you may consider what the Section 179 can do for you! Section

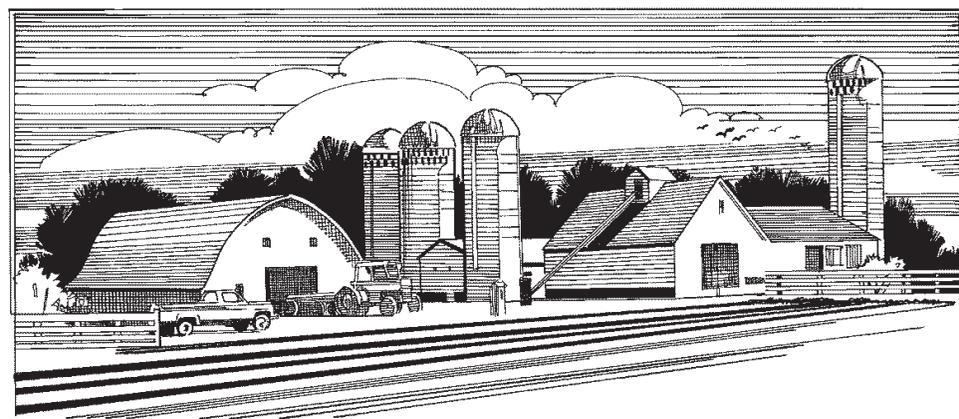
179 allows the farmer to expense up to \$102,000 in qualified property purchased in 2004. In 2004, qualified property now includes "off the shelf" computer software.

Use the Section 179 only if you need it to reduce net farm income to a reasonable level. In the past few low-income years, tax practitioners used traditional depreciation methods to stretch out depreciation expenses. Section 179 will come in handy for many in 2004.

**Depreciation.** Another option is to use the special depreciation allowance equal to 50% of the property's depreciable basis after the Section 179 and before regular depreciation is figured. Qualified property must be placed in service by the end of the year. This is yet another option that tax practitioners will consider as they prepare your return.

**Pre-paid expenses for 2005.** As we move towards year-end, it may also make sense to procure needed supplies in advance. These prepaid expenses may be claimed if they do not exceed 50% of other expenses on 1040 Schedule F. Not knowing what milk prices may end up to be in 2005, this method of reducing taxable income is favored over buying something that you may not really need at the end of the year. Feed, fertilizer, seed, spray, and bale wrap are excellent investments to prepay.

**Mariane Kiraly is a Dairy Farm Management Educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension Delaware County. She lives in Franklin, NY on a 50-cow Registered Holstein dairy with her husband Andrew and children Ian and Alison.**



"There's nothing like it, whether you are a kid or not."

And I'm sure that's how Phil and Pam feel about Cooper's Ark Farm.

You can contact the Metzgers at Cooper's

Ark Farm by calling 518-295-7662 or visit them on the web at [www.coopersarkfarm.com](http://www.coopersarkfarm.com).

**Terry Lavigne is an agricultural educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Albany County.**

**Resource Spotlight****Civic Agriculture: Reconnecting Farm, Food and Community**

Cornell's Community, Food, and Agriculture Program (CFAP) has announced the publication of a new book by Tom Lyson, Director of CFAP and Liberty Hyde Bailey Professor of Development Sociology. *Civic Agriculture: Reconnecting Farm, Food and Community* takes a close look at the global and local dimensions of America's agriculture and food system.

Lyson describes how over the past 50 years a largely diversified and locally managed food system was transformed into a

highly industrialized, corporately controlled system. He suggests that the social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities of the current system are leading many producers and consumers to seek more sustainability and democracy in production and distribution. Civic agriculture is Lyson's term for the more locally-based food systems that are now being reborn.

Lyson cites the rise of farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture, specialized agricultural districts, local foods stores,

consumer cooperatives, and more as evidence of the emergence of a civic agriculture. "These new organizational forms," he explains, "have the potential to nurture local economic development, maintain diversity and quality in products, and provide forums where producers and consumers can come together to solidify bonds of local identity and solidarity."

According to Lyson, civic agriculture embodies a commitment to developing and strengthening an economically, environ-

mentally, and socially sustainable system of agriculture and food production that relies on local resources and serves local markets and consumers. "The enterprises that make up and support civic agriculture can be seen as part of a community's problem solving capacity," he says. His new book outlines the theoretical and organizational dimensions of this emerging civic agriculture.

**For information on how to order a copy of *Civic Agriculture*, contact Gretchen Gilbert at CFAP, [gcg4@cornell.edu](mailto:gcg4@cornell.edu) or 607-255-9832.**

**MARKETING**

# Smart Marketing Tip...Tap Into Local School Fundraisers

With limited budgets, many schools engage in fund raising for special programs or trips. Selling local farm products is a great way to bring in needed funds while supporting local farms and agriculture.

Superintendent Michael Wendt of Wilson, NY School District recently invited local growers and processors to display and describe their products at a superintendent's conference day. Wendt hopes to see more local products incorporated in school fundraisers. Products on display included apples, jams

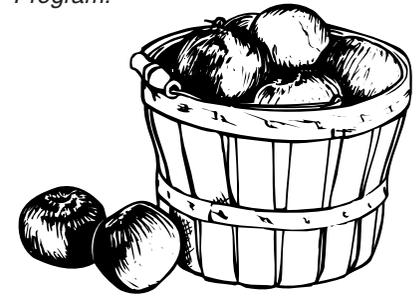
and jellies, dried fruits, and salad dressings. One local farmer, Jim Bittner of Singer Farms, described a fund-raiser that he has been involved with. Each fall, he sells and delivers bulk apples and plastic bags to a local school. He also loans the school a scale so that students can package the apples into 3-pound bags, and sell them for a 300% profit.

In this way, students earn money for special projects while learning about and supporting local agriculture. As an added bonus, the local apples are tasty and nutritious!

If you have a product that might be good for a local school fundraiser, visit your school superintendent or school principle and see what's possible!

**To find out more about marketing opportunities in schools, colleges and universities contact the Cornell Farm To School Program at 607-255-2730, email Program Director Jennifer Wilkins at [jlw15@cornell.edu](mailto:jlw15@cornell.edu), or visit [www.cce.cornell.edu/farmtoschool](http://www.cce.cornell.edu/farmtoschool).**

*Adapted from the Summer 2004 issue of New York Farm To School News, the newsletter of the Cornell Farm To School Program.*



**PRODUCTION AND MANAGEMENT**

# Transferring the Dairy Business: The Story of Leatherstocking Farm

By Steve Richards

Bill and Joan started farming at their present location in 1961. They made a good living and over time were able to grow the operation from 40 cows to 100 cows. But Bill started to get concerned about keeping the farm in business as he and Joan approached retirement age with no sons or daughters interested in continuing the operation.

Bill had hired Gregg in 1987. After Gregg had worked for Bill for about 8 years, he mentioned to Bill that he had always wanted to farm on his own. Gregg and Bill started talking about the possibilities of transferring the farm to Gregg.

By 1995, Gregg had already worked his way up to be in charge of the dairy herd. Bill had already started to let Gregg make management decisions related to the herd. Bill didn't have a problem letting go because he "didn't want to run the farm for Gregg," he wanted Gregg to learn to run it on his own.

**THE TRANSFER PLAN**

In 1997, Bill and Gregg decided to work out a plan to transfer the farm. The plan was to occur in stages-with ownership and management of various elements of the farm operation transferring to Gregg at the same time. Both Gregg and Bill wanted to keep the plan simple and flexible with provisions to get in or out of the transfer easily if problems occurred.

Stage 1 was for Gregg to own and manage the dairy herd only; buying feed from Bill and leasing the buildings and equipment.

In Stage 2 Gregg would take over and purchase the dairy facilities, equipment, and heifer barns. Finally, in Stage 3 Gregg would purchase the farm land and farm house and take over the management of crops and book keeping.

**FINANCING THE TRANSFER**

It was important to Bill that Gregg use third party (bank) financing to buy the farm assets. The first farm assets were transferred when Bill helped

Gregg get a bank loan to buy his 86 cattle on a four year note in 1997. After the cows were paid off, Bill and Gregg realized that the farm needed to be more efficient in order for Gregg to make the payments on the farm equipment and buildings.

So Bill appraised the land, buildings, and equipment on the farm and worked out a deal with Gregg. Bill would pay for a new freestall barn and Gregg would pay for the

parlor. This plan worked to the benefit of both parties.

Sales contracts were drawn up for the cattle and equipment. A lease contract was drawn up for the buildings, later Gregg purchased them with a sales contract and a bank loan. A contract for purchasing feed from Bill was in effect until Gregg bought the land.

These contracts and agreements supersede the wills of both Bill and Joan, which also reflect that these contracts will still be valid if either dies prematurely.

**KEYS TO SUCCESS**

**Have enough money!** A good cash flow and retirement savings off the farm allowed Bill to be flexible in his farm transfer arrangements and made it easy for Gregg to spread the payments to Bill out over time.

**Good communication:** Every night since Gregg started working with Bill, he's eaten dinner with Bill and Joan. They all agree that this meeting time "outside the barn" is more relaxed and a better atmosphere for arranging business matters.

**Don't be too picky over money:** "Don't get caught up in the little stuff" says Bill. Although Bill charges Gregg for almost everything, he strives to keep it fair. Agreeing to things ahead of time and having a good method to keep track of expenses is one key, according to Bill. Gregg says that Bill is generous (he never charges Gregg for his labor) and he trusts that Bill would never take advantage of the situation and "rip him off."

**Plan for retirement:** Bill and Joan had saved for retirement outside the farm. Bill says this is the reason he hasn't had to be so picky with Gregg; he can afford to pass the farm on without worrying about his retirement going down the tubes.

Bill's role as a mentor: Bill sums it up in one sentence: "I am as interested in seeing Gregg succeed as I was in seeing myself succeed."

**Good feed supplied by Bill:** Even before Gregg came along, Bill had a high milk production average. Bill credits this to the excellent feed he harvests every year. Gregg's herd average has stayed up, thanks in a large part to Bill supplying him with good feed.

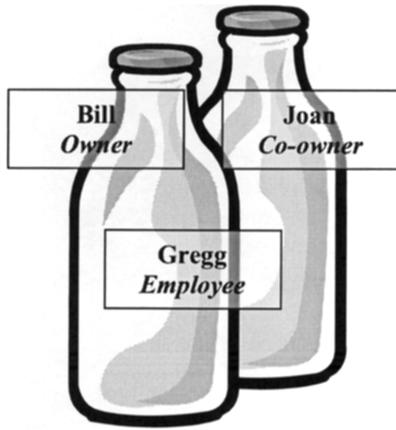
**Get assistance:** Bill and Gregg worked out the details of their transfer plan with a "transfer team" that included Cornell Coop-

erative Extension and First Pioneer Farm Credit.

**Steve Richards is Program Director for NY FarmNet/NY FarmLink. NY FarmLink offers free business consultation to help New Yorkers who are facing farm business transition challenges. Agriculture professionals are available to assist with your special business needs; including lending, legal advice, tax reporting, estate and retirement planning, agricultural production assistance, business analysis and farm family communications. To find out more call 1-800-547-3276.**

Management Responsibility		
Farm Responsibility	Management Transfer Order	Completed Yet?
Youngstock	2	Yes
Livestock	1	Yes
Equipment	3	Yes
Cropping Operation	4	No
Book Keeping	5	Yes

Farm Assets	Order Of Transfer	Financial Transfer Methods	Legal Transfer Methods
Livestock	1	4 year bank loan	Sales contract
Equipment (other than field crop)	2	5 year bank loan	Sales contract
Buildings/Facilities	3	Leased buildings years 1-4. Purchased with 10 year bank loan in year 5	Lease contract with a purchase option. Option to buy exercised in year 5.
Field Crop Equipment	4	Bought feed from Bill, years 1-5. Purchased with 5 yr bank loan in year 6	Contract between Bill and Gregg (year 1-5) Sales contract year 6
Land (tillable)	4	Land rent included in feed costs Gregg paid to Bill (yr 1-5). Purchase land with 20 yr loan in year 6.	Contract between Bill and Gregg (year 1-5) Sales contract year 6
Land (non tillable)	5	Included in land loan.	Included in land loan.
Farm House	6	Included in land loan.	Included in land loan.



**MARKETING**

# New Generation Cooperatives — Adding Value and Profits

By Duncan Hilchey

In the last decade a new wave of farmer cooperatives has emerged in the US. With the goal of garnering profit further up the supply chain, farmers have organized an estimated 200 "new generation co-ops" to add value to their commodities. These co-ops represent the latest innovation in American farmers' struggle to achieve as a group what they are not able to achieve as individuals in the marketplace.

A good example is Mountain View Harvest headquartered in Aurora, Colorado. Mountain View is a wheat growers' cooperative that mills its own wheat flour and bakes specialty breads for the restaurant trade. It began with a feasibility study and business planning activities funded by USDA Rural Development. The feasibility study, which was conducted by a consulting firm, suggested that "par baking" bread was a profitable value-adding activity. The process involves baking bread to within 10 percent of completion and then flash-freezing and shipping it. Restaurants and in-store bak-

eries finish baking the product. Restaurants like it because they are able to serve fresh-baked bread products quickly and without all the processing activities.

In addition to their value-adding activities, another feature of new generation co-ops that distinguishes them from traditional co-ops is the ownership structure and degree of commitment and control that farmer-owners have. Typically new generation co-ops, also called "closed co-ops," have a limited number of farmer-members. Each member must make a substantial equity

investment to raise the capital required for the co-op's start-up, and a major equity drive is usually part of the organizing and recruiting process. The stakes are high for joining a new generation co-op, and the financial investment that farmers make reflects a high degree of loyalty and commitment to the co-op.

New generation co-ops have typically been organized by farmers themselves. However communities, organizations and agencies can play many supportive roles. Some co-ops have issued stock to members of their host community, which gives local residents a stake in the fortunes of the co-op, and allows them to help shape its development.

Interestingly, several large new generation cooperatives, including Mountain View Harvest, have recently decided to convert their legal structure from cooperative to C-corporation in order to more effectively generate investment capital and finance expansion. The rationale behind these conversions is that having a "closed co-op" limits growth because farmer-members don't have the resources to self-finance, and that conversion to a corporation is a necessary step to stay competitive in the global food and agriculture system.

It is too early to assess how these conversions may affect the thinking of other new or existing cooperatives, but observers are watching intently to see what, if any, vestiges of the old cooperative carry forward into the new corporate culture—especially how farmers will fare.

For more information on new generation cooperatives and other cooperative business structures, contact the Cornell Cooperative Enterprise Program at 607-255-8800, [bmh4@cornell.edu](mailto:bmh4@cornell.edu), or visit [www.cooperatives.aem.cornell.edu](http://www.cooperatives.aem.cornell.edu).

Duncan Hilchey is a Senior Extension Associate with the Community Food and Agriculture Program at Cornell. This article is adapted from *Growing Home: A Guide to Reconnecting Agriculture, Food and Communities*, available from the Cornell Community, Food and Agriculture Program, 607-255-9832.



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**FOREST AND WOODLOT****Living the Logging Legacy**

0By David R. Reid

***Part time logging delivers these advantages to the small farmer:***

- ***Diversifies income***
- ***Enhances cash flow***
- ***Increases use of equipment***
- ***Promotes resource management***
- ***Provides healthy interaction with nature.***

In the beginning we were all loggers. Our ancestors cleared the virgin forests for farmland. They shaped, fitted, and joined logs to build homestead cabins. With ax, adze, and drill bit they crafted flat surfaced beams for framing barns, and eventually, with water power, they sawed logs for lumber.

In New York State logging was a great economic enterprise in the 19th and early 20th Centuries. Many books attest to the folklore as well as the economic impact of logging in the Adirondacks. Examples are *Jacks, Jobbers, and King: Logging in the Adirondacks* by Peter C. Welsh, and *Man of the Woods* by Herbert Keith.

Fortunately, I grew up on a farm in Central New York where wood cutting was a major activity. We worked in the woods fall, winter, and spring — buzz sawing limbs for firewood, skidding logs for lumber, and gathering posts for building fence. Winter mornings, after milking, we stepped out of the warm stable into the frosty light to

**FARMING OPPORTUNITIES****From Pasture to Product — The Road to Added Value**

By Keith Morgan-Davie

It all started during a delivery. I dropped off an 1800 pound load of our sheep milk at the creamery, for which they'd pay me \$.76 a pound, and decided to treat myself to one of their products for the ride home. I chose a 6 ounce cup of sheep milk yogurt, figuring that the chances were pretty good that at least a small part of the milk that had gone into it was ours. I balked a little at the price - \$2.00 for 6 ounces? Well, it's a treat, after all!

I ate the yogurt as I drove, which I know I shouldn't do, but there wasn't any traffic to speak of, and I needed to keep moving toward home. The yogurt was ok, but nothing all that special, either, and it got me thinking. A gallon of sheep milk weighs about 8.4 pounds, and there are 128 fluid ounces in a gallon, so I'd just paid \$42.67 a gallon, or \$5.08 a pound for slightly spoiled milk! That, my friends, is value added! Really made me wonder what my own milk would taste like as yogurt, and what the average discriminating customer might pay for it?

In this day of low commodity prices, the idea of turning a raw material into a finished product before selling it is getting a lot of attention, particularly in the dairy industry where the price of milk in the store keeps going up while the price paid the farm stays the same or goes down. Milking sheep is still something of a novelty, and the supply of milk is still quite limited, so we're actually getting a half decent price for the raw milk. But still, keeping more of that final dollar wouldn't offend me either. I determined to look into the idea of doing

behold a ten-wheeler loaded with logs we had cut the day before.

It was a daily winter scene. Snow-streaked, high rising loads of ash, maple, and beech shimmered in the sun. After breakfast, we delivered these logs to the sawmill, and returned to the woods before noon, cutting a new load for the next day.

As a youngster, of course, I didn't fully appreciate the economic value of those logs stacked on wheels, but I felt their symbolic power. Logging gave us a psychological edge, the leverage one feels when rolling a log with a cant hook or peavey. While the neighbors complained about the cold and huddled around their stoves, we went to the woods and kept warm in an active way.

Now, with years of experience, I know how logging created economic leverage for the farm. It provided steady income beyond the monthly milk check, and it had the effect of multiplying the milk check, freeing the farm from a total dependency on milk income. As a result, this family could afford to update machinery and add conveniences to the household. Truly, logging then was a form of rural existentialism.

Today, logging continues as a viable alternative for those who own harvestable timber. Often this resource is ignored and undeveloped because logging is associated with big equipment, contractors, and large scale operations. With this perception, the timber resources may be appraised and an agreement with a contractor follows. The

some processing on the side, just to see what I could come up with.

First thing to do was experiment. Take some milk, pasteurize it, cool it off and add a couple tablespoons of yogurt from the store, then incubate for 8 to 10 hours and see what you get. Hmm - not very good!

Now, that didn't work, so who can I ask for help? One of my neighbors is a dairy inspector for the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, maybe he knows something?

Well Dennis did have a few suggestions, both for culture and technique, and with his help, my next batch set properly and actually looked like yogurt, so I was making progress. What I hadn't expected, though, was the flavor. Made from my own milk, this yogurt had a rich, creamy flavor, just enough different from commercial cows milk products to really set it off as "special." We had a marketing angle!

Of course there's a big difference between making a half gallon batch in your kitchen, and making a 20 gallon batch to sell, and I was clueless as to where to go next. Again, Dennis was there, this time putting me in touch with the folks at the Morrisville College Dairy Incubator Project, a great setup where the complete dairy processing plant at the college, including staff, is available to help budding entrepreneurs learn the ins and outs of turning raw milk into marketable products. With their help, my first batch of 15 gallons was packed in 8 ounce cups, sealed and incubated in July 2003.

profit then is stripped away by the commission paid to the contractor. Under these conditions, harvesting logs seems unworthy of the time and effort it requires.

Farmers, however, should not depend on contractors to harvest trees. They can do it with equipment they already own. Most farmers own a chain saw or two. A team of horses or a medium size tractor works well for skidding logs to a landing. A hydraulic loader and chains adapt easily to loading. A utility trailer or a modified running gear drawn by horses, tractor, or pickup truck delivers loads to the mill.

If the nearest mill is miles away, log buyers will come to the farm and arrange for trucking. Besides owning the essential equipment, farmers have an additional advantage in choosing when to log. Part time or casual logging fits in conveniently between seasonal tasks such as haying and combining, silo filling, and fall plowing as well as during the winter months.

No doubt, logging is burdened with negative images. The popular press seldom presents logging as a management practice. Often it is portrayed as a rape of the land, the destruction of a natural resource. Consequently, some landowners may feel ambivalent about pursuing it.

Trees, however, are a renewable resource, and good farmers manage resources for future use. By their very nature, farmers are not clear cutters. They know that selective cutting of mature trees enhances the growth of younger stock. It fits into a woodlot management program which nurtures a healthy woods, furnishing firewood and lumber for the future.

Meanwhile, I'm dealing with another issue — labeling. Walk around the supermarket and you'll see a dizzying variety of labels on everything from anchovies to yellow squash, but have you ever stopped to wonder about what's written there? Much of it is regulated in some way, including what information must be there, where it must be located on the label, and what size the print must be.

Lucky for me the folks at Ag and Markets have a rep who's familiar with all the requirements, and you can send them a copy of your proposed label for approval, and they'll send back the changes you need to make. Unfortunately, they don't seem to have one list of the requirements that they could distribute, so I ended up going back and forth four times before everything was corrected and ready to go.

Now I've got product, and I've got an approved label on the computer, but I still don't have a label I can actually stick on the container — I needed a printer, someone who could recreate the label I'd developed in a form that could actually be mass-produced. Yellow pages to the rescue. I met with a couple of local folks who advertised printing services, and found one that I could work with. Again it took several meetings, going over my requirements, measuring the type size on the samples the printers sent back, correcting errors, both mine and theirs, and another three weeks go by (with my yogurt rapidly running out of shelf life!) before the first roll of 500 labels is ready to apply to cups.

In all, from the day when I decided to look into processing milk until I actually had

Nevertheless, since forest management is a complex interaction between humans and nature, it is important to consult a professional forester or Cornell Cooperative Extension for approved practices. Also, forest or woodlot owners have access to abundant information. I've found the following books to be informative and entertaining reading: *Timber Management for Small Woodlands* by Gary Goff, et al.; *Farming the Small Forest* by Laurence C. Walker; *Working with Your Woodland: A landowner's Guide* by Beattie, Thompson, and Levine; *The Woodland Steward* by James R. Fazio; *Woodlot Management Handbook: Making the Most of Your Wooded Property for Conservation, Income, or Both* by Stewart Hilts and Peter Mitchell.

At its best, logging is a resource management activity that encourages rigorous physical activity. It provides a source of outdoor exercise in a natural setting. Thus it is aesthetically satisfying work. And beyond initial rewards, it pays dividends; for once the logging is done, treetops provide firewood. Cutting firewood delivers triple dividends: healthy exercise, heat from exertion, and winter warmth on a flaming hearth.

In living the logging legacy we do not want to repeat the harsh life of the frontier or the big woods. We can, however, roll the legendary skills of our ancestors into the science and technology of today to manage a renewable resource for profit. This is rewarding enterprise.

**David Reid farms 200 acres in Adams Center, Jefferson County, NY. In the past he operated a cow/calf beef operation, and produced milk on a rotational grazing system. He now grows crops and raises dairy replacement heifers.**

yogurt on a store shelf, 13 months elapsed. Product development isn't a quick process, and I've since been told that I did it in record time. Since then I've added two flavors (Maple and Blackberry), and have a third nearly ready to go. Sales have been quite good, and at a wholesale price of \$1.50 to \$1.70 for 8 ounces, we're realizing a very substantial premium over what our raw milk sells for.

Certainly milk processing isn't for everyone, but the potential of adding value is certainly well worth a little investigation when you consider the possible rewards, and the alternatives. With the price of cows' milk hovering so close to the state average cost of production, many farms may find that they have very few choices left if they want to stay in dairying. Certainly there are challenges in developing a product for final consumption, but nothing beats seeing your farm name on the shelf, unless it's a chance comment from a customer: "...and get some of that sheep milk yogurt - it's superb!"

**Keith Morgan-Davie farms 48 acres of intensively managed pasture at Windhaven Farm near Utica, NY with his wife Margie and their two daughters. Their diverse operation includes a 75 ewe sheep dairy, 230 laying hens, and a direct marketed grass fed and finished natural meat business, providing their mostly local customers with beef, pork, lamb, broiler chickens, turkeys, eggs, and sheep-milk yogurt. This article first appeared in NYPA News, the newsletter of the NY Pasture Association.**

**GRAZING**

# Northern NY Ag Research Looks at Raising Grass-Fed Holstein Beef

By Kara Lynn Dunn

How can dairy farmers turn 60,000 bull calves a year into profit? A Northern New York Agricultural Development Program research project is looking at how to raise and sell grass-fed Holstein beef.

"Holstein cows are traditionally dairy animals," says Brent Buchanan, dairy educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of St. Lawrence County and a participant in the NNY Grass-Fed Beef Research Project. "Female calves are kept and grown into milkers while male calves, which account for slightly more than half of all dairy calves born, are generally sold and shipped out of the area to be raised as veal or feedlot cattle."

Recent Cornell University research, however, shows that Holstein steers can produce beef of quality equal or superior to that of the traditional beef breeds - Hereford, Black Angus, and others, according to Michael J. Baker, beef cattle extension specialist with

Cornell University and principal investigator on the project.

More than fifteen years of research at Cornell University and other institutions support raising Holstein beef on a high-grain diet. But Baker says that consumers are increasingly interested in buying grass-fed beef that is produced without growth hormones and antibiotics.

"We need research into the ability of Holstein steers to produce beef on an all-forage diet. This project will give us that needed insight," Baker says.

"We are looking at grass-fed Holstein beef because our trump card here in the North Country is our abundant grass forage," says Buchanan. "This project began in acknowledgement of a lost resource in our bull calves. The closing of the US border to

## Number of Dairy Cows and Traditional Breed Beef Cows in Northern New York

(National Agricultural Statistics Service Census data for 2004)

	Dairy Cows	Beef Cows
Clinton County	36,300	1,000
Essex County	5,400	500
Franklin County	31,400	1,200
Jefferson County	66,600	3,700
Lewis County	49,000	800 beef
St. Lawrence County	74,900	4,000
<b>REGIONAL TOTAL</b>	<b>263,600</b>	<b>11,200</b>

Canadian beef added an extra punch. We need to analyze the opportunity to create locally-raised Holstein beef."

Bill VanLoo, agriculture and rural economic vitality educator with CCE St. Lawrence County, says, "Before the border closed, 40 to 50 percent of Canada's beef production had been sold south into the US."

Thirty Holstein bull calves purchased or donated from six St. Lawrence County dairy farmers are currently grazing on pasture at the CCE St. Lawrence County's Learning Farm in Canton. Caretakers are observing a prescribed schedule of fertilizing and mowing fields and intensively rotating (moving) calves from one field section to another to graze. Intensive rotation allows efficient use and regrowth of grass pastures.

Grass samples are analyzed monthly. Calves are weighed every 28 days to monitor weight gain. At the end of the grazing season, the calves will be moved to CCE's Kennedy Farm for the winter. The calves will be divided into three groups, each

In spring 2005, the calves will return to the Learning Farm for another grazing season. Researchers will use visual inspection and ultrasound measurement to grade the fat and muscle content of the calves after 90 days on pasture. The calves will be harvested at the high Select quality grade. Meat samples will be evaluated at the Pennsylvania University Meat Lab.

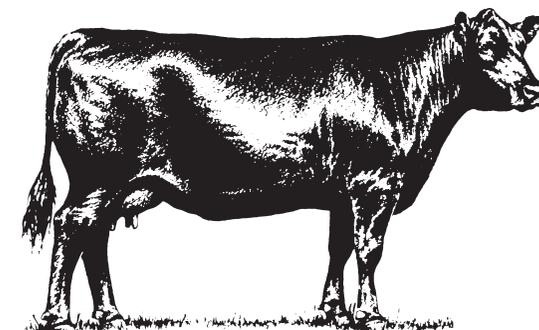
How will consumers like grass-fed Holstein beef? In late 2005, consumer taste panels will evaluate steaks from the project's calves for taste and tenderness.

Northern New York Agricultural Development Program researchers will be sharing project results with North Country farmers on how to grow Holsteins for beef and how to develop markets for grass-fed Holstein beef through Extension newsletters, field days and via the website at [www.ansci.cornell.edu/beef](http://www.ansci.cornell.edu/beef).

For more information on the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program contact Jon Greenwood at 315-386-3231, Joe Giroux at 518-563-7523; or R. David Smith at 607-255-7286.

Kara Lynn Dunn is a publicist with the Northern NY Agricultural Development Program.

group receiving a different all-forage diet throughout the winter.



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